

IN MEMORY OF

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Born, 1794 — Died, 1878.

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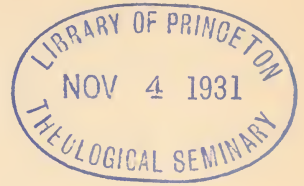
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EVENING POST STEAM PRESSES.



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William Cullen Bryant.

THANATOPSIS.

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

To him who in the love of nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart;—
Go forth, unto the open sky, and list
To nature's teachings, while from all around—
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air—
Comes a still voice—Yet a few days, and thee
The all beholding sun shall see no more
In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears,
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist
Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being, shalt thou go
To mix for ever with the elements,
To be a brother to the insensible rock
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould.

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings,
The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun,—the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between;
The venerable woods—rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks

That make the meadows green; and poured round all,
Old ocean's gray and melancholy waste,—
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom.—Take the wings
Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,
Save his own dashings—yet the dead are there:
And millions in those solitudes, since first
The flight of years began, have laid them down
In their last sleep—the dead reign there alone.
So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw
In silence from the living, and no friend
Take note of thy departure? All that breathe
Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come
And make their bed with thee. As the long train
Of ages glide away, the sons of men,
The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes
In the full strength of years, matron, and maid,
And the sweet babe, and the gray-headed man—
Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,
By those, who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unflinching trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT died on Wednesday June 12th, 1878, at twenty-five minutes before six o'clock in the morning. The articles collected in this book were printed in the New York EVENING POST on and soon after that day.

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The ending of a life so full of years, of observation and of experience as Mr. Bryant's, before we consider the special character and particular field of its influence, and aside altogether from such considerations, impresses us with the remarkable continuance and scope of that influence. This life lasted but sixteen years less than a century. We may always say of such a reach of time that it is crowded with events of high importance to mankind; but the events of the nineteenth century, in their stirring interest, in the rapidity with which they have worked out results which usually are remote and slow, in the wonderful advancement of the race which they have signalized and effected, are without a parallel. To say of a single life that it was contemporaneous with all of these events is profoundly suggestive. The mention of a few of them will emphasize the suggestion.

When Mr. Bryant was born France had not come out of her terrible revolution. He watched in his youth the career of the first Napoleon. He attained manhood in the year of the battle of Waterloo. He studied, coincidently with its development, the growth of Great Britain after that significant event, in power, in wealth, in influence, in the political liberality upon which these were founded. He witnessed the triumph among the English people of those principles of commercial freedom and of institutional and administrative reform with which he was in full sympathy, and to whose advocacy he gave his earlier and later energies with perfect faith in their final victory also among the American people.

His life was co-equal almost with that of the republic of the United States. The Constitution was born only a few years before himself. The struggles of its youth were contemporaneous with those of his own. He shared in the excitements and discussions which attended its application and interpretation. He helped to form the public opinion which supported and firmly established it. He had written that which alone would make his name endure as long as the English tongue when the war of 1812 began. He was familiar with the history while it was making of the great parties of the country. He announced the birth of some of them and he recorded their death. Participating in the contest of the Federalists and the old Republicans, he was in the thick of the fight between the Democratic and Whig parties which succeeded. He was active and indomitable in the long battle for the denationalizing of slavery and the nationalizing of freedom, which was at last carried to a triumphant conclusion by the Republican army, among whose generals none were more conspicuous than he. During the fifty years and more of his journalistic work we might say of him, in respect to the portentous events which have moulded the political character of the republic, and determined its political destiny, what he would have shrunk from saying of himself. All of these things he saw, and a great part of them he was. If we measure his life with the more modern history of letters, its continuance will appear no less striking. His first and best known poem was written two years before Sir Walter Scott began that series of novels which made the name of "Waverley" immortal. He had reached middle age when Dickens and Thackeray began to write, and he was still in the plenitude of his intellectual power when the pen dropped forever from their fingers. It would be easy to enlarge the list of contemporaneous names—names which have become classical in

literature, or names which recall brilliant promises never fulfilled and reputations as ephemeral as they were dazzling. The boundaries of Mr. Bryant's life mark on the one side the first signs of literary life on this continent, and on the other side whatever of worth or celebrity American literary work has secured. Nor are they less broadly inclusive in respect to the arts and sciences. His hand might have traced, from day to day, as the events occurred, the most remarkable achievements of research and invention.

We say, then, that this life is impressive, first of all, because of the striking way in which it connects us with the lives of past generations. It presents to us the activities of the century. When we find embodied in it influences as marked, as beneficent, as wisely directed to pure and elevated ends, as they were long in their continuance, we fairly measure this remarkable life. Its story has been many times told; yet, seldom is a story less necessary to be told, because seldom is a life more familiar to the public. Quiet in his tastes, unostentatious in his habits, Mr. Bryant yet lived largely in the general eye, because his specialties of work brought him into wider notice than almost any of his contemporaries. It is a trite thing to say that the poet of a people is the intimate of the people; that he enters into the innermost sanctuaries of their hearts and homes. How pre-eminently Mr. Bryant was the poet of his people is told in another place. The subject need not here be dwelt upon. It is enough to say that the people are curious concerning these intimates of theirs; they inquire closely into the personality of their poets; and so it happens often that the men who write the songs of a nation are better and more widely known than the men who fight its battles, or the men who make its laws, or the men who administer its government.

But it was not only as a poet that Mr. Bryant dwelt continually in the eye of his people. To the gracious gift of expression in the highest of the arts, and to the retired pursuits of the student and the scholar, he joined those of the active, working journalist. These occupations might at first seem to be inconsistent; but they were not actually so in the case of Mr. Bryant. His poems offer no hint, suggest no suspicion,

of the capacity, still less of the taste, for the sharp collisions, the always beginning and never ending strife and competition of the newspaper. Yet we suspect that, great as was his delight in the exploration of all the stores of ancient and modern learning, joyful as was the labor with which he committed to the world noble thoughts and fine fancies in exquisite settings of verse, he found the liveliest and the most enduring satisfaction in the work of the journalist. At all events, it is this part of his work which is most interesting to newspapers—which concerns especially the newspaper whose honored head he has been for more than fifty years, and which, for that time, has held a chief place in his thoughts. Mr. Bryant was a newspaper man and something more. That is to say, while he had a relish for the keen encounters of daily journalism and was well equipped for them, while he had a quick eye for the present and passing aspects of things and a ready hand to turn them to account, he regarded the newspaper not merely as a vantage ground from which to shoot folly as it flies—though he could do that upon occasion with incisive and unerring shaft. He knew that in the columns of the newspaper could be done much of the work which the statesman does in the legislative hall and in the executive council chamber. He resolved to do some of this work; and he did a great deal of it. So, in the controversies of the day, in the attacks and defenses and criticisms and retorts, which were even more plentiful in the newspapers of the past than in those of the present, he kept a serious and certain purpose steadily in view. The daily discussions—which sometimes are held to be valuable only because they serve to get to-day's newspaper out in readable fashion—were employed by Mr. Bryant to strengthen and support fixed convictions, to bring public opinion into line with a body of principles, and to hold it there. According to one theory of journalism, to-day is the whole of life, and to let to-morrow take care of itself is a part of newspaper religion. It cannot be denied that the practice of this theory is effective. To treat what is uppermost to-day simply because it is uppermost, without caring what may be uppermost to-morrow; to fix the reader's attention to-day, no matter upon what,

and no matter where his attention may be to-morrow—to do this certainly is to make an entertaining newspaper, if not a useful one. This was not Mr. Bryant's theory. To him to-day was by no means the whole of life, and he was not disposed to let to-morrow take care of itself. On the contrary, to-day was chiefly valuable to him so far as it provided for to-morrow. That is to say, he used the newspaper conscientiously to advocate views of political and social subjects which he believed to be correct. He set before himself principles whose prevalence he regarded as beneficial to the country or to the world, and his constant purpose was to promote their prevalence. He looked upon the journal which he conducted as a conscientious statesman looks upon the official trust which has been committed to him, or the work which he has undertaken—not with a view to do what is to be done to-day in the easiest or most brilliant way, but so to do it that it may tell upon what is to be done to-morrow, and all other days, until the worthiest object of ambition is achieved. This is the most useful journalism; and, first and last, it is the most effective and influential.

Mr. Bryant's political life was so closely associated with his journalistic life that they must necessarily be considered together. He never sought public office; he repeatedly refused to hold it. He made no effort either to secure or to use influence in politics except through his newspaper, and by his silent, individual vote at the polls. The same methods marked his political and his journalistic life. He could be a stout party man upon occasion, but only when the party promoted what he believed to be right principles. When the party with which he was accustomed to act did what according to his judgment was wrong, he would denounce and oppose it as readily and as heartily as he would the other party. He was as independent in his politics as he was in his newspaper. If he had adopted the cause of a political organization whose platform embodied what he believed to be sound doctrine, he would let the party go as soon as it let the doctrine go, or as soon as the doctrine had lost its vital force. Party names never deceived him. He refused to be bound

merely by them; and he was quick to detect when the name ceased to be descriptive, when it had become a mere skeleton from which the sinews and flesh and life-blood had fallen away. He was one of the first of the old Democrats to discover that his party was no longer what its name implied; that calling itself Democratic it did violence to the very notion of what is democratic, as he believed, by upholding and defending human slavery. He was warm to welcome any new party which promised to make the really democratic doctrine of liberty the rule of the nation. So he was one of the first of the original Republicans to see and to say, when the war was over and slavery was abolished, that the Republican party could not maintain itself upon the exhausted questions which had called it into being, and which it had discussed at the polls and on the battlefield with overwhelming success; that it must prove its right to exist by keeping abreast of the times, and by its intelligent treatment of living subjects of paramount importance. In a word, Mr. Bryant's course in politics and in journalism was governed by a regard not so much for names as for things; not so much for a present and partisan triumph as for the final prevalence of the right, as it was given him to see it.

Mr. Bryant's work and its methods indicate distinctly the points of a strong and clear character. With an abiding sense of right, duty and responsibility, he applied the rule which it imposed rigidly to others, but he accepted it as fully for himself. Dominated by conviction and by an indomitable will in carrying out the purpose to which it directed him, he was as severe in his intellectual and moral modes as in his literary taste. But this severity was not inconsistent with a simplicity and a geniality and a freshness equally remarkable. His own stern integrity and his impatience with the lack of integrity in other persons did not interfere with a delicate respect for their rights, but seemed rather to quicken his sensibilities. Nor, as his readers well know, did this severity check his broad and deep sympathy with all tender impulses and his warm and instinctive care for all forms of human joy and human suffering.

This, perhaps, is not the place to speak particularly of the personal traits of Mr. Bryant which were revealed to those fortunate ones who enjoyed the rare privilege of close intercourse with him. The time seems fit, while his grave is still unclosed, only to express, in the few and moderate words which would have been most tasteful to him, the sense which no words could adequately express of the wide gap in the world immediately about him which his departure has left. The hand which so often filled this column rests from its long and beneficent labor. The catastrophe is always familiar yet never familiar. Death, no matter how watched and expected, takes us by surprise at last. Death, which has

been waited for eighty-three years, has come un-
 awares—suddenly, yet fittingly and in a time
 fully ripe. As the Nature whose loving com-
 panion and faithful translator he was tenderly
 led him to the close by a descent so smooth and
 gradual that it scarcely was suspected, he real-
 ized with singular completeness and felicity the
 tranquil consummation promised, in the words
 with which he himself has clothed the verse of
 the Greek poet, to the wise Ulysses :

“ So at the last thy death shall come to thee,
 and gently take thee off
 In a serene old age that ends among
 A happy people.”

THE STORY OF BRYANT'S LIFE.

BY AN EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE.

The American schoolboy, studying the past history of his country from a book and its current history from the newspapers, is often struck by the contrasts presented by the opening and the closing scenes of the century following the declaration of peace between the United Colonies and Great Britain. The earlier years seem to his fresh young mind a period of Arcadian tranquillity, jarred by none of the fierce shocks of partisan political warfare, marked by the reign of noble motives in men's hearts, buoyant with the hopes of youth, and charged almost to surfeit with the spirit of brotherly love. He would doubtless be astonished could he look over our shoulder at a little twelve-page pamphlet, printed on coarse paper and brown with age, in which a schoolboy like himself, writing as the first quarter of a century was about drawing to an end, has embalmed in verse his gloomy forebodings of the future of the infant republic.

The title-page of the first edition of this work reads as follows:

THE EMBARGO;

OR, SKETCHES OF THE TIMES.
A SATIRE.

By a Youth of Thirteen.

BOSTON :

PRINTED FOR THE PURCHASERS.

1808.

The poem, which is in rhymed pentameters evidently modelled after Pope's, shows that human nature is very much alike, the world over and the ages through, and that a popular government—place it in what era of the earth's history

you will—is bound to know something of the strife of factions. It begins as follows:

"Look where we will, and in whatever land,
Europe's rich soil, or Afric's barren sand,
Where the wild savage hunts his wilder prey,
Or art and science pour their brightest day,
The monster, *Vice*, appears before our eyes,
In naked impudence, or gay disguise.

"But quit the meaner game, indignant Muse,
And to thy country turn thy nobler views;
Ill-fated clime! condemned to feel th' extremes
O a weak ruler's philosophic dreams;
Driven headlong on to ruin's fateful brink,
When will thy country feel—when will she think!

"Satiric Muse, shall injured Commerce weep
Her ravish'd rights, and will thy thunders sleep;
Dart thy keen glances, knit thy threat'ning brows,
Call fire from heaven to blast thy country's foes.
Oh! let a youth thine inspiration learn—
Oh! give him 'words that breathe and thoughts that
burn!'

"Curse of our nation, source of countless woes,
From whose dark womb unreckon'd misery flows:
Th' Embargo rages, like a sweeping wind,
Fear lowers before, and famine stalks behind."

In the last couplet quoted above we reach the root of our young patriot's plaint. The embargo of 1807, laid on the shipping in American ports at the instance of President Jefferson to counterbalance Napoleon's Berlin and Milan decrees and the British orders in council, had agitated the country more than almost any governmental measure since the adoption of the Constitution; and the young poet, whose home was in a community where hostility to the administra-

tion was most rank, could scarcely have escaped infection.

After tracing the evils which Jefferson's policy would bring directly upon

"COMMERCE, that bears the trident of the main,
And AGRICULTURE, empress of the plain,"

the "Youth of Thirteen" proceeds to show what a great danger threatens the republic as an indirect result:

"How foul a blot Columbia's glory stains!
How dark the scene!—infatuation reigns!
For French intrigue, which wheedles to devour,
Threatens to fix us in Napoleon's power;
Anon within th' insatiate vortex whirl'd,
Whose wide periphery involves the world.

"Oh, Heaven defend! as future seasons roll,
These western climes from Bonaparte's control;
Preserve our freedom, and our rights secure,
While truth subsists and virtue shall endure!

* * * * *

"Columbians, wake! Evade the deep-laid snare!
Insensate! Shall we ruin court, and fall,
Slaves to the proud autocrat of Gaul?
Our laws laid prostrate by his ruthless hand,
And independence banished from our land!"

Further on he pays his compliments to Mr. Jefferson in the following strain:

"And thou, the scorn of every patriot name,
Thy country's ruin and her council's shame!
Poor servile thing! derision of the brave!
Who erst from Tarleton fled to Carter's cave;
Thou, who, when menac'd by perfidious Gaul,
Didst prostrate to her whisker'd minion fall;
And when our cash her empty bags supply'd,
Didst meanly strive the foul disgrace to hide;
Go, wretch, resign the presidential chair,
Disclose thy secret measures, foul or fair.
Go, search with curious eye for horned frogs,
Mid the wild wastes of Louisianian bogs;
Or, where Ohio rolls his turbid stream,
Dig for huge bones, thy glory and thy theme.
Go, scan, Philosophist, thy * * * charms,
And sink supinely in her sable arms;
But quit to abler hands the helm of state,
Nor image ruin on thy country's fate."

As the embargo was removed in 1809 and the excitement throughout the country subsided, as Napoleon did not reduce the United States to subjection, and as the President did not resign, we can afford to smile at this bit of poetic exco-riation, as its author was wont to in after years. Before laying the poem aside, however, we must find a place for one more quotation, descriptive

of a phase of political life in our land of freedom which has suffered little change in the course of time:

"E'en while I sing, see Faction urge her claim,
Mislead with falsehood, and with zeal inflame;
Lift her black banner, spread her empire wide,
And stalk triumphant with a Fury's stride.
She blows her brazen trump, and at the sound
A motley throng, obedient, flock around;
A mist of changing hue o'er all she flings,
And darkness perches on her dragon wings!

"As Johnson deep, as Addison refin'd,
And skill'd to pour conviction o'er the mind,
Oh, might some patriot rise! the gloom dispel,
Chase Error's mist, and break her magic spell!

"But vain the wish, for hark! the murmuring
 meed
Of hoarse applause from yonder shed proceed;
Enter and view the thronging concourse there,
Intent, with gaping mouth and stupid stare;
While, in the midst, their supple leader stands,
Harangues aloud, and flourishes his hands;
To adulation tunes his servile throat,
And sues, successful, for each blockhead's vote."

This poem attracted general notice, and called forth even from the staunchest democrats a word in commendation of its literary strength. Doubts as to its authorship, however, were freely expressed, and a leading review of that day gave them written form in its columns. A few months later a second edition appeared, with the following "Advertisement" prefixed:

"A doubt having been intimated in the Monthly Anthology of June last, whether a youth of thirteen years could have been the author of this poem—in justice to his merits the friends of the writer feel obliged to certify the fact from their personal knowledge of himself and his family, as well as his literary improvement and extraordinary talents. They would premise, that they do not come uncalled before the public, to bear this testimony. They would prefer that he should be judged by his works, without favor or affection. As the doubt has been suggested, they deem it merely an act of justice to remove it—after which they leave him a candidate for favor in common with other literary adventurers. They, therefore, assure the public, that Mr. Bryant, the author, is a native of Cummington, in the County of Hampshire, and in the month of November last, arrived at the age of fourteen years. These facts can be authenticated by many of the inhabitants of that place, as well as by several of his friends who give this notice; and if it be deemed worthy of further inquiry, the

printer is enabled to disclose their names and places of residence.

"February, 1809."

This edition bears on its title page the full name, William Cullen Bryant, which here makes its first mark upon the history of American literature. The name, but not the genius. Before the publication of "The Embargo," its youthful author had contributed poems to the newspapers in the neighborhood of his home, many of which would bear the test of criticism to-day as the work of a much older writer. Some of these, and also some verses written expressly for the volume, appear in company with "The Embargo" in its second dress. The list includes "The Spanish Revolution," "The Contented Ploughman," and an "Ode to Connecticut River," all written in 1808; "The Reward of Literary Merit," "Drought," and several clever poetical "Enigmas" in imitation of the Latin, written in 1807; and a "Translation from Horace" (Lib. I, car. XXII.), without date. These must not be hastily set down, however, as the work of a precocious child craving to see his name in print and to hear himself talked about; in a very modest way Master Bryant had been pursuing his calling for years, either anonymously or under signatures not likely to identify him. One of his early efforts we find in the *Hampshire Gazette*—a newspaper published in Northampton, Mass.—for the 18th of March, 1807. It is signed simply "C. B.," but the editor has prefixed to it this title and note in one: "A Poem, composed by a lad of twelve years old, to be exhibited at the close of the winter school, in presence of the Master, the Minister of the Parish, and a number of private gentlemen." We print the poem in full:

"When the dire strife with Britain's pow'r unfurled
War's bloody banners over half the world,
Affrighted science cast a backward look,
Clapt her broad pinions and the states forsook.
But freedom soon resum'd her ancient sway
And rising Learning pour'd imperfect day:
Columbia saw and bless'd the glorious light,
But fate's dark clouds half hid it from the sight.
Now these dispell'd, much brighter days arise,
And purer splendors greet unclouded eyes;
How strangely alter'd from our fathers' days,
These modern times, the subject of my lays!
O! may some remnant of their virtue still
Glow in our hearts, and mould our way'ring will!
Small the provision then, for learning made;

Few were the schools established for its aid.
But now they rise, increasing o'er the state,
And smiling Science lifts her eye sedate.
Thanks to the master, whose instructions kind,
By slow gradation has inform'd the mind;
Who for our cares was often forc'd to go
Through heaps, high-pil'd, of ever drifting snow.
In fleecy storms and cold descending rains,
When chilling breezes swept across the plains;
Who, though he gave some salutary wounds,
Drove not correction to its utmost bounds.
Thanks to the preacher whose discernment true,
Upholds religion to the mental view;
Unfolds to us instruction's ample page,
Rich with the fruits of every distant age;
Pours simple truths, by love divine refin'd,
With force resistless on the youthful mind.
Thanks to the gentlemen assembled here,
To see what progress we have made this year,
In learning's paths, our footsteps to survey,
And trace our passage up the sloping way.
And thanks to Heaven, the first and best of all,
The auditor of ev'ry humble call—
That (tho' a few have fall'n behind the rest,)
So much improvement has our studies blest.
And since I am to serious thoughts inclined,
Now to the scholars I'll address my mind;
A word or two, in which myself may bear
If not a greater, yet an equal share.
My comrades! tho' we're not a num'rous train,
'Tis doubtful whether we shall meet again;
For death's cold hand may aim th' unerring blow,
And lay, with heavy stroke, the victim low;
From this frail state, th' unbod'y'd soul will fly,
And sink to hell, or soar above the sky.
Then let us tread, as lowly Jesus trod,
The path that leads the sinner to his God;
Keep Heaven's bright mansion ever in our eyes,
Press tow'ards the mark and seize the glorious prize.
"CUMMINGTON, February 19, 1807."

History furnishes few parallels to the case of Bryant, the boy poet. Chief among these rank Tasso, who at nine years of age wrote his "Lines" to his mother; Cowley, who at ten years finished his "Tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe;" Pope, who was twelve years old when he finished his "Ode to Solitude," and Chatterton, whose "Hymn for Christmas Day" was ended at the same age. A well-known man of letters, writing of the early but healthy development of Bryant's genius, justly says: "His first efforts betray no symptoms of a forced, hot-bed culture, but seem the spontaneous growth of a prolific imagination. They are free from the spasmodic forces which indicate a morbid action of the intellect, and flow in the polished, graceful, self-sustaining tranquil

ity which is usually the crowning attainment of a large and felicitous experience." It is worthy of note in this connection that, of the small circle of poets who are known to have begun composing in boyhood, Bryant was the only one whose powers remained unimpaired long past the age allotted to man as the term of his natural life.

The Anglo-Saxon habit of making much of the home and its surroundings leads us, in studying the career of a noted man, to inquire what were the associations of his boyhood; it will be of interest, therefore, to glean such facts as we may concerning the household in the quaint old gambrel-roofed dwelling in Cummington, Mass., in which William Cullen Bryant first saw the light on the third day of November, 1794.

The founder of the Bryant family in this country was Stephen Bryant, who came from England in the Mayflower about the year 1640. His grandson Dr. Philip Bryant, who was born in 1732, practiced medicine in North Bridgewater, Mass.; he married Silence Howard, a daughter of Dr. Abiel Howard, of West Bridgewater, Mass., who bore him nine children. One son, Peter, born in 1867, succeeded him in his profession. At that time lived in Bridgewater Mr. Ebenezer Snell, whose daughter Sarah, a comely maiden with blue eyes and light-brown hair, won the young doctor's heart. Upon Mr. Snell's removing his family and effects to Cummington, Peter Bryant followed him thither, established himself in practice, and in 1792 led to the altar the bride of his choice.

Dr. Bryant is described as having been of medium height, broad shouldered, and with a well-knit frame; he took great pride in his muscular strength, and would exhibit it by such feats as lifting a barrel of cider from the ground into a cart over the wheel. His manners were uncommonly gentle and reserved, and his disposition serene, yet he was very fond of society. His election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for several terms, and afterward to the State Senate, gave him a cause for visiting Boston very often, and associating with the cultured literary circle whom he met there. When not engaged in legislative matters, too, he would make it a point to attend the annual meeting of the Medical Society, which was held in Boston,

and the letters written to his wife during these intervals of recreation breathe a spirit of the purest enjoyment. His fondness for humorous composition of all sorts, and for amusing verses in particular, was a marked trait, and for the gratification of this taste he was enabled to draw on the literature of two languages, having passed a part of his early life on the Isle of France, acting as surgeon of a merchant ship. In dress the doctor was always scrupulously neat; he followed the Boston fashions, moreover, with enough care, even in his village home, to give an observer the impression that he was a city gentleman visiting the country for a holiday jaunt.

Mrs. Bryant, who was a lineal descendant of Miles Standish's lieutenant, John Alden, was a woman of great force of character, which manifested itself in her dignified bearing and in the unyielding quality of such convictions as she saw fit to express. Her loathing for a drunkard was equalled only by her detestation of a liar. In all her household management she displayed an energy which indicated as clearly as did her physical features the stock from which she had sprung. Like most women in her day, her school education extended no further than the ordinary English branches, and all the knowledge she possessed beyond that point was the result of reading, an occupation in which she took great pleasure. The fruit of her union with Dr. Bryant was a family of seven children, the subject of our sketch being second in the order of birth.

Thus much for the home associations of Bryant's youth. Of a part of these, and of many other incidents of the child-life of that period, he has given us a charming picture in an article printed in *St. Nicholas* for December, 1876, under the title, "The Boys of My Boyhood:"

"The boys of the generation to which I belonged—that is to say, who were born in the last years of the last century or the earliest of this—were brought up under a system of discipline which put a far greater distance between parents and their children than now exists. The parents seemed to think this necessary in order to secure obedience. They were believers in the old maxim that familiarity breeds contempt. My own parents lived in the house with my grandfather and grandmother on the mother's side. My grandfather was a disciplinarian of the stricter sort,

and I can hardly find words to express the awe in which I stood of him—an awe so great as almost to prevent anything like affection on my part, although he was in the main kind, and, certainly, never thought of being severe beyond what was necessary to maintain a proper degree of order in the family.

“The other boys in that part of the country, my school-mates and play-fellows, were educated on the same system. Yet there were at that time some indications that this very severe discipline was beginning to relax. With my father and mother I was on much easier terms than with my grandfather. If a favor was to be asked of my grandfather, it was asked with fear and trembling; the request was postponed to the last moment, and then made with hesitation and blushes and a confused utterance.

“One of the means of keeping the boys of that generation in order was a little bundle of birchen rods, bound together by a small cord, and generally suspended on a nail against the wall in the kitchen. This was esteemed as much a part of the necessary furniture as the crane that hung in the kitchen fireplace, or the shovel and tongs. It sometimes happened that the boy suffered a fate similar to that of the eagle in the fable, wounded by an arrow fledged with a feather from his own wing; in other words, the boy was made to gather the twigs intended for his own castigation.

“The awe in which the boys of that time held their parents extended to all elderly persons, toward whom our behaviour was more than merely respectful, for we all observed a hushed and subdued demeanor in their presence. Toward the ministers of the gospel this behavior was particularly marked. At that time, every township in Massachusetts, the State in which I lived, had its minister, who was settled there for life, and when he once came among his people was understood to have entered into a connection with them scarcely less lasting than the marriage tie. The community in which he lived regarded him with great veneration, and the visits which from time to time he made to the district schools seemed to the boys important occasions, for which special preparation was made. When he came to visit the school which I attended, we all had on our Sunday clothes, and were ready for him with a few answers to the questions in the ‘Westminster Catechism.’ He heard us recite our lessons, examined us in the catechism, and then began a little address, which I remember was the same on every occasion. He told us how much greater were the advantages of education which we enjoyed than those which had fallen to the lot of our parents, and exhorted us to make the best possible use of them, both for our own sakes and that of our parents, who were ready to make any sacrifice for us, even so far as

to take the bread out of their own mouths to give us. I remember being disgusted with this illustration of parental kindness, which I was obliged to listen to twice at least in every year.

“The good man had, perhaps, less reason than he supposed to magnify the advantages of education enjoyed in the common schools at that time. Reading, spelling, writing and arithmetic, with a little grammar and a little geography, were all that was taught, and these by persons much less qualified, for the most part, than those who now give instruction. Those, however, who wished to proceed further took lessons from graduates of the colleges, who were then much more numerous in proportion to the population than they now are.

“Drunkenness, in that demure population, was not obstreperous, and the man who was overtaken by it was generally glad to slink out of sight.

“I remember an instance of this kind. There had been a muster of a militia company on the church green for the election of one of its officers, and the person elected had treated the members of the company and all who were present to sweetened rum and water, carried to the green in pailsfull, with a tin cup to each pail for the convenience of drinking. The afternoon was far spent, and I was going home, with other boys, when we overtook a young man who had taken too much of the election toddy, and, in endeavoring to go quietly home, had got but a little way from the green when he fell in a miry place and was surrounded by three or four persons, who assisted in getting him on his legs again. The poor fellow seemed in great distress, and his new nankeen pantaloons, daubed with the mire of the road, and his dangling limbs, gave him a most wretched appearance. It was, I think, the first time that I had ever seen a drunken man. As I approached to pass him by some of the older boys said to me, “Do not go too near him, for if you smell a drunken man it will make you drunk.” Of course I kept at a good distance, but not out of hearing, for I remember hearing him lament his condition in these words: ‘Oh dear, I shall die!’ ‘Oh dear, I wish I hadn’t drunk any!’ ‘Oh dear, what will my poor Betsey say?’ What his poor Betsey said I never heard, but I saw him led off in the direction of his home, and I continued on my way with the other boys, impressed with a salutary horror of drunkenness and a fear of drunken men.

“From time to time, the winter evenings, and occasionally a winter afternoon, brought the young people of the parish together in attendance upon a singing-school. Some person who possessed more than common power of voice and skill in modulating it, was employed to teach psalmody,

and the boys were naturally attracted to his school as a recreation. It often happened that the teacher was an enthusiast in his vocation, and thundered forth the airs set down in the music-books with a fervor that was contagious. A few of those who attempted to learn psalmody were told that they had no aptitude for the art, and were set aside, but that did not prevent their attendance as hearers of the others. In those days a set of tunes were in fashion mostly of New England origin, which have since been laid aside in obedience to a more fastidious taste. They were in quick time, sharply accented, the words clearly articulated, and often running into fugues in which the bass, the tenor, and the treble chased each other from the middle to the end of the stanza. I recollect that some impatience was manifested when slower and graver airs of church music were introduced by the choir, and I wondered why the words should not be sung in the same time that they were pronounced in reading.

"The streams which bickered through the narrow glens of the region in which I lived were much better stocked with trout in those days than now, for the country had been newly opened to settlement. The boys all were anglers. I confess to having felt a strong interest in that 'sport,' as I no longer call it. I have long since been weaned from the propensity of which I speak; but I have no doubt that the instinct which inclines so many to it, and some of them our grave divines, is a remnant of the original wild nature of man. Another 'sport,' to which the young men of the neighborhood sometimes admitted the elder boys, was the autumnal squirrel hunt. The young men formed themselves into two parties equal in number, and fixed a day for the shooting. The party which on that day brought down the greatest number of squirrels was declared the victor, and the contest ended with some sort of festivity in the evening.

"For the boys of the present day an immense number of books have been provided, some of them excellent, some mere trash or worse, but scarce any are now read which are not of recent date. The question is often asked, What books had they to read seventy or eighty years since? They had books, and some of great merit. There was 'Sanford and Merton,' and 'Little Jack;' there was 'Robinson Crusoe,' with its variations 'The Swiss Family Robinson' and 'The New Robinson Crusoe;' there was a Mrs. Trimmer's 'Knowledge of Nature,' and Berquin's lively narratives and sketches translated from the French; there was 'Philip Quarll,' and Watts's 'Poems for Children,' and Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and Mrs. Barbauld's writings, and the 'Miscellaneous Poems' of Cowper. Later we had Mrs. Edgeworth's 'Pa-

rent's Assistant' and 'Evenings at Home.' All these, if not numerous, were at least often read, and the frequent reading of a few good books is thought to be at least as improving—as useful in storing the mind and teaching one to think—as the more cursory reading of many. Of elementary books there was no lack, nor, as I have already intimated, any scarcity of private instructors, principally clergymen, educated at the colleges."

As a lad, William Cullen Bryant early displayed a taste for reading and study. The strong vitality he inherited from both father and mother made it possible for him to indulge this liking without the harm that might have followed in the case of a punier frame; and at an age when most boys are still content with their fairy tales he was drinking in the grand romances of antiquity from their original springs, fostering a lighter fancy with the epigrammatic verse of Queen Anne's era, and even turning into metre and rhyme such thoughts as the beauties of nature or the stirring events of his own day raised in his mind. The imitation of Pope's poetic method which is so marked in some of these youthful compositions may be accounted for by the influence of the father's taste upon the son's. To the fact that Dr. Bryant did direct his boy's attention to poetry in early life we have the testimony of those familiar lines in the "Hymn to Death:"

"For he is in his grave who taught my youth
The art of verse, and in the bud of life
Offered me the Muses."

More useful yet, however, both to himself and to the world which was afterward to profit by it, was another department of knowledge opened to the lad through this companionship. Dr. Bryant's scientific attainments were not limited to an acquaintance with the phials and retorts of his laboratory. In the open fields he was equally at home; and his son, in twilight strolls along the country roads, and talks at noon-day under the big trees near the homestead, drew from him those first lessons in botany which were so expanded by later research as to embrace the whole field of organic but inanimate nature.

The year after the second publication of "The Embargo," the country having become more

tranquil, Master Bryant contributed to the *Hampshire Gazette* the following poem :

THE GENIUS OF COLUMBIA.

Far in the regions of the west,
On throne of adamant upraised,
Bright on whose polished sides impressed,
The Sun's meridian splendors blazed,
Columbia's Genius sat and eyed
The eastern despot's dire career ;
And thus with independent pride,
She spoke and bade the nations hear.
" Go, favored son of glory, go !
" Thy dark aspiring aims pursue !
" The blast of domination blow,
" Earth's wide extended regions through !
" Though Austria twice subjected, own
" The thunders of thy conquering hand,
" And tyranny erect her throne,
" In hapless Sweden's fallen land !
" Yet know, a nation lives, whose soul
" Regards thee with disdainful eye ;
" Undaunted scorns thy proud control,
" And dares thy swarming hordes defy ;
" Unshaken as their native rocks,
" Its hardy sons heroic rise ;
" Prepared to meet thy fiercest shocks,
" Protected by the favoring skies.
" Their fertile plains and woody hills,
" Are fanned by freedom's purest gales !
" And her celestial presence fills
" The deepening glens and spacious vales."

She speaks; through all her listening bands
A loud applauding murmur flies;
Fresh valor nerves their willing hands,
And lights with joy their glowing eyes !
Then should Napoleon's haughty pride
Wake on our shores the fierce affray ;
Grim terror lowering at his side,
Attendant on his furious way !
With quick repulse, his baffled band
Would seek the friendly shore in vain,
Bright justice lift her red right hand,
And crush them on the fatal plain.

W. C. B.

Cumington, January 8, 1810.

This was followed, two years later, by another patriotic effusion. In introducing it, the editor of the *Gazette* remarks that it is "from the pen of Mr. William C. Bryant, son of Doctor Bryant, of Cumington"—a note of identification that calls up a smile, now that Doctor Bryant, rather

than his son, shines by reflected light. Following is the poem :

AN ODE

FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1812.

Tune, "Ye Gentlemen of England, &c."

THE BIRTH DAY of our nation
Once more we greet with smiles;
Nor falls as yet our hapless land,
A prey to foreign wiles.
Yet still increasing dangers wake,
The STATESMAN'S pious fear;
The whirling vortex of our fate
Sweeps near, and still more near;
The dreadful warning, whispered long
In louder tones we hear.

Far on a rock of ocean,
A generous EAGLE sleeps;
The winds are mustering all their rage,
To overwhelm him in the deeps.
Above, around, the blackening clouds
Their gathering volumes pour;
Collected thunders, o'er his head
Await the sign to roar.
Oh ! wake him from that fated sleep
Above the storm to soar.

Lo, where our ardent rulers
For fierce assault prepare;
While eager "ATE" waits their beck
To "slip the dogs of war."
In vain against the dire design,
Exclaims the indignant land;
The unbidden blade they haste to bare,
And light the unhallowed brand.
Proceed ! another year shall wrest
The sceptre from your hand !

Should JUSTICE call to battle
The applauding shout we'd raise ;
A million swords would leave their sheaths,
A million bayonets blaze.
The stern resolve, the courage high,
The mind untam'd by ill,
The fires that warmed our LEADER'S breast
His followers' bosoms fill.
Our FATHERS bore the shock of war,
Their Sons can bear it still.

The same ennobling spirit
That kindles valor's flame,
That nerves us to a war of right,
Forbids a war of *shame*;
For not in CONQUEST'S impious train
Shall Freedom's children stand ;
Nor shall, in guilty fray, be raised
The high-souled warrior's hand ;
Nor shall the PATRIOT draw his sword
At GALLIA'S proud command.

No! by our FATHER'S ASHES,
 And by their sacred cause,
 The GAUL shall never call us slaves,
 Shall never give us laws ;
 Even let *him* from a swarming fleet
 Debar his veteran host,
 A LIVING WALL OF PATRIOT HEARTS
 Shall fence the frowning coast—
 A bolder race than generous *Spain*,
 A better cause we boast.

INSULTED SONS OF FREEDOM!
 Who fear all succor past,
 Who celebrate—a solemn train—
 This day—perhaps the last.
 Though shut from hope the *Peasant* mourns,
 The ruined *Tradesman* weeps ;
 Though scowls oppression round our shores,
 And danger stalks the deeps,
 Yet *one* there is to mark our wrongs,
 The God that never sleeps.

Ye need no loud monition
 To warn you to the strife,
 To fire you in the eternal cause
 OF LIBERTY AND LIFE ;
 For, dark in each indignant eye,
 The MUSE can well explore
 The firm resolve, which proudly tells
 THAT FACTION'S REIGN IS O'ER,
 Which tells—the MAN that gives us laws
 SHALL GIVE US LAWS NO MORE!

* One more poem appeared in the *Hampshire Gazette* before Bryant reached years of maturity, and we print it, as we have printed its predecessors, for the purpose, first, of tracing the development of the poet's genius and the increase of his technical skill; and second, of presenting to the public some works of his that have never before been collected, and that will be cherished for their author's sake as tenderly as the fruits of his later and better thought. It may be of interest, moreover, to note in this connection the fact that the lines which follow were composed at least a year and a half after the first draft of the world-renowned "Thanatopsis" had been laid away in his portfolio for revision and correction:

ODE

FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1814.

By WM. C. BRYANT.

Amidst the storms that shake the land,
 The din of party fray,
 And woes of guilty war, we meet
 To hymn this sacred day,
 For all that breathes of ancient worth

Our lingering hope revere ;
 Each print of freedom's sacred steps,
 Each trace of happier years.

Our skies have glowed with burning towns,
 Our snows have blushed with gore,
 And fresh is many a nameless grave,
 By Erie's weeping shore.
 In sadness let the anthem flow,—
 But tell the men of strife,
 On their own heads shall rest the guilt
 Of all this waste of life.

But raise, to swell the general song,
 Our notes of holiest sound ;
 And bless the hands which rent the chain
 The struggling world that bound.
 Lo! Europe wakes the sleep of death—
 Her pristine glories warm!
 The soul of ancient freedom comes
 And fills her mighty form!

Well have ye fought, ye friends of man,
 Well was your valor shown ;
 The grateful nations breathe from war,—
 The tyrant lies o'erthrown.
 Well might ye tempt the dangerous fray,
 Well dare the desperate deed:
 Ye knew how just your cause—ye knew
 The voice that bade ye bleed.

To thee the mighty plan we owe
 To bid the world be free ;
 The thanks of nations, Queen of Isles!
 Are poured to heaven and thee,
 Yes!—hadst not thou, with fearless arm,
 Stayed the descending scourge;
 These strains, that chant a nation's birth,
 Had haply hymned its dirge.

But where was raised *our country's* hand
 Amidst that dreadful strife?
 Where was her voice, when Hope grew faint,
 And freedom fought for life?
 Oh! bitter are the tears we shed,
 Columbia! o'er thy shame!
 A stain the deluge could not cleanse
 For ever blots thy fame.

Nor to avenge a nation's wrongs
 Does power demand our aid ;
 The sword is bared—but angry Heaven
 Frowns on the accursed blade.
 The men who snatched it from the sheath,
 A fearful curse withstands ;
 The blood of innocence is red
 Upon their guilty hands.

Still, to defend our country's shores,
 We hasten to the field,
 And should the foe invade—our ranks
 May fall, but never yield.

The day, that sees the victory their's,
 Shall look on many a grave:
 Our veteran fathers taught their sons
 To guard the soil they gave.

Come to thine ancient haunts, and bring
 Thy train of happy years,
 Oh, PEACE! the sunshine of thy smile
 Shall dry a nation's tears!
 From hill, and plain, and ocean's verge,
 White with the unwonted sail,
 Shall burst a boundless shout of joy,
 Thy reign renewed, to hail!

During the period covered by the three poems last in order we have the briefest possible record of Bryant's life and occupations. We know, however, that he left school and entered Williams College, in Williamstown, Mass., in 1810. Nothing in his career as a student seems to have marked him as a man destined to be famous in after years, although he was distinguished for aptness and industry in the departments of classical learning and in polite literature generally. He did not finish the prescribed course, but took an honorable dismissal in 1812, and began the study of the law. Three years later he was admitted to the bar, and opened an office in Plainfield, Mass. This situation proving too retired, he removed to Great Barrington, and after an interval of pretty active practice, was made a Justice of the Peace. His earliest official act, outside of the routine duties of the court, was the marriage of Major Robbins, a well-known citizen of Great Barrington, to Miss Tobey. Both bride and groom were members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and entertained pronounced views respecting the character of the marital contract; and, there being no clergyman of their own denomination within reach, they preferred a purely civil ceremony to the intervention of a dissenting minister. The circumstances of the wedding were related to the writer of this article by Major Robbins in 1877, with as much distinctness as if it had occurred but yesterday; both the male members of the essential trio having at that time passed the allotted age of man by more than a half-score of years, in excellent health and in full possession of their mental faculties.

While living in Great Barrington, Mr. Bryant was himself married to Miss Frances Fairchild of that village, a woman who possessed to an un-

common degree the finer graces of her sex. Their union, which lasted for nearly half a century, was attended with all the happiness that flows from temperaments differing enough to supplement each other, congeniality of tastes, chivalrous devotion on the one side and generous appreciation on the other; and the death of his wife, in the summer of 1866, dealt Mr. Bryant a blow from which he never recovered.

A tradition exists in connection with his marriage which exemplifies in an amusing manner the poet's extreme modesty. It seems that he was then acting as village clerk, one of the duties of the post being the "reading of the banns" in church for three successive Sundays when a wedding was to take place among the congregation. Unable to bring his courage to the point of facing his fellow-worshippers with the announcement of his approaching nuptials, Mr. Bryant wrote out the necessary notice in due form, and pinned it on the church door instead. Thus the story runs. How much of it is strictly true we have no means of determining; it answers the purpose, nevertheless, of illustrating a fact which those who knew its subject best will vouch for, namely, that the impassive exterior which misled many observers to believe the heart beneath it cold, was only the result of an unconquerable diffidence.

Letters written by Catherine Sedgwick give us a pen portrait of the young lawyer and amateur poet of that period. One is dated at Stockbridge on the 17th of May, 1820: "I wish," says Miss Sedgwick, "you would give my best regards to Mr. Sewall, and tell him that I have had great success in my agency. I sent for Mr. Bryant last week, and he called to see me on his return from court. I told him Mr. Sewall had commissioned me to request some contributions from him to a collection of hymns, and he said, without any hesitation, that he was obliged to Mr. Sewall, and would with great pleasure comply with his request. He has a charming countenance, and modest but not bashful manners. I made him promise to come and see us shortly. He seemed gratified; and if Mr. Sewall has reason to be obliged to me (which I certainly think he has) I am doubly obliged by an opportunity of securing the acquaintance of so interesting a man."

"We have a great deal of pleasure," she writes again from New York about two years afterward, "from a glimpse of Bryant. I never saw him so happy, nor half so agreeable. I think he is very much animated with his prospects. Heaven grant that they may be more than realized. I sometimes feel some misgivings about it; but I think it is impossible that, in the increasing demand for native literature, a man of his resources, who has justly the *first* reputation, should not be able to command a competency. He has good sense, too, good judgment and moderation. * * * He seems so modest that every one seems eager to prove to him the merit of which he appears unconscious. I wish you had seen him last evening. Mrs. Nicholas was here, and half a dozen gentlemen. She was ambitious to recite before Bryant. She was very becomingly dressed for the grand ball to which she was going, and, wrought up to her highest pitch of excitement, she recited her favorite pieces better than I ever heard her, and concluded the whole, without request or any note of preparation, by 'The Water-fowl' and 'Thanatopsis.' Bryant's face 'brightened all over,' was one gleam of light, and, I am certain, at the moment he felt the ecstasy of a poet."

We must once more go back a little, in order to bring down all the threads of our narrative to the point where they unite at the entrance of their hero upon his public career as a man of letters. In 1812, while still a student at Williams College, Bryant devised the poetic scheme which later took the form of "Thanatopsis," and spread his fame throughout the world. Local tradition represents him as actually composing the poem while seated on a rock in a lovely ravine known as Flora's Glen, on the outskirts of Williamstown. There is reason to suspect that much of this story is apocryphal, and the fact that the rock is still pointed out to visitors by way of proof weighs but little in the balance of belief. It is true, however, that the poem owes its inception to the influences of that beautiful spot upon the mind of a youth peculiarly susceptible to impressions from Nature in her nobler moods. For nearly four years the work lay in its author's portfolio, untouched save for purposes of occasional correction; then it was sent to the *North American Re-*

view with so modest a note of introduction that its authorship was left in considerable doubt.

The *Review* at that day was conducted by a number of young literary gentlemen, united under the name of the North American Club. A committee of publication managed the business affairs of the periodical, while two members, Richard H. Dana and Edward Tyrell Channing, had the editorial department in charge. Dana read "Thanatopsis" carefully when it was submitted, and turned it over to his associate with the remark that it could not possibly be the work of an American. There was a completeness, an artistic finish about it, added to the grandeur and beauty of the ideas, to which, in his opinion, none of our native writers had attained. Channing, and others of the club through whose hands the manuscript was passed, concurred in this view. One day, while the poem was still under consideration, Dana received intelligence at his Cambridge home that the mysterious author was a member of the Massachusetts State Senate, which was then in session. Throwing everything else aside, the editor seized his hat and cane and set out for Boston on foot. Arrived at the State House, he sought the Senate Chamber, and had pointed out to him the person he was looking for—a tall, middle-aged man, with a business-like aspect. Plainly, this was not the author of "Thanatopsis," and without waiting for an introduction, he started for home again in great disappointment. The mistake on the part of his informant was the result of a similarity of names between the poet and the Senator; but it soon led, by a roundabout course, to the identification he desired, and a correspondence was opened which brought the two young men into those relations of friendship and respect which each has cherished through life.

"Thanatopsis" appeared in the *North American Review* in 1816. In the next year it was followed by the "Inscription for an Entrance into a Wood," written in 1813. After that Bryant contributed prose papers from time to time; and it was chiefly through the influence of Dana and his coadjutors that he was invited in 1821 to deliver a poem before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard College. The response to this invitation was the well-known didactic poem, "The Ages." In the same year a collection of Bryant's

writings was made, and published in a small volume of forty-four pages at Cambridge.

Before taking leave of this period it may be worth noting that Mr. Dana was among the earliest of the race of critics to oppose the arbitrary conclusions of Jeffrey, and give to Wordsworth and Coleridge the position of men of genius and great poets. His views were in so little accord with those of most of his associates in the North American Club that he was relieved of the editorship of the *Review*, and Edward Everett was installed in his place. Some time later Mr. Bryant reviewed Dana's "Idle Men," and sent the manuscript to Mr. Everett, who "respectfully declined" it. But the end was not yet; Everett was himself succeeded by Sparks, who was friendly to Dana, and who, when the latter's "Buccaneer" was published, wrote straightway to Mr. Bryant, reminding him that the time for his revenge had arrived. Accordingly an early number of the *Review* contained an able criticism of the "Idle Man" and the "Buccaneer," in which the author of both books received the meed of credit for which a petty spite had kept him waiting so long.

When "The Ages" appeared, in 1821, a very commendatory notice of it was printed in the *New York American*, a periodical edited by Charles King, afterward President of Columbia College. The article was from the pen of Gulian C. Verplanck, a leading spirit in the literary society of New York, who had written two or three excellent addresses for the Historical Society of this city, and was known as a wit through his political satire, "The Bucktail Bards." Mr. Verplanck used frequently to visit the house of Mr. Henry D. Sedgwick, about whose fireside the literary men of that day, including Hillhouse, Dunlap, Halleck, Percival, Cooper and others less known to fame, were wont to assemble from time to time. Mr. Sedgwick, who was a warm admirer of Bryant, longed to secure the presence of his favorite in this charmed circle; and to him, perhaps, more than to any other person, New York owes her possession of the great poet and journalist for the best part of his life. With Verplanck's assistance, Mr. Sedgwick procured for Bryant the co-editorship of the projected *New York Review and Athenæum Magazine*, his associ-

ate being Henry J. Anderson, afterward Professor of Mathematics in Columbia College. This was in the winter of 1824-5; and on the arrival of the despatch containing the announcement in Great Barrington, our young lawyer closed his musty tomes with a sigh of relief, turned over his briefs to a brother attorney, and set his affairs in order with all speed for a removal to the city.

In view of the later relations sustained by Mr. Bryant to this journal, the following paragraph from the *EVENING POST* of April 21st, 1825, presumably written by Mr. William Coleman, the editor-in-chief, is of no little interest:

"*New York Review and Athenæum Magazine*.—Yesterday a person called on me to solicit a subscription to a periodical work under this title; and on looking at the prospectus I perceived it was to be a continuation of the *Atlantic Magazine*, to be conducted by Henry James Anderson and William Cullen Bryant, under this new name. I therefore did not hesitate a moment to enrol myself among the number of those who engaged to patronize this undertaking. We have, from its early appearance, taken a more than common interest in the success of the *Atlantic Magazine*, which early gave promise of becoming a useful, able, and even elegant vehicle for the improvement of literary taste, and the advancement of sound doctrines in the science of political economy, and of just and acute criticism;—nor have our expectations been disappointed. We now anticipate still additional excellence, from the well-known talents of the gentleman now associated with the former editor; and from 'the co-operation (which is alluded to in the prospectus,) of several gentlemen, amply qualified to furnish the departments of Intelligence, Poetry and Fiction.' With such encouragement, we cannot consent to compound for anything short of a decided superiority in the various walks of letters. If it is what it ought to be, and what we expect it will be, to suppose it can want the most liberal, and indeed splendid patronage, would be a libel on the more refined of our citizens."

In glancing over the body of this number of the *EVENING POST*, we cannot pass without remark some of its striking features, indicative of the condition in which Mr. Bryant found journalism on his first entry into New York in the capacity of editor, and suggesting the wonderful changes that took place during his long career. Here, for example, are extracts from English newspapers of the 24th of March; news from the State Legislature in Albany as late as the

19th of April; a dispatch from Halifax, N. C., dated April 8th, announcing that "a main of cocks will be fought at Northampton Court House on Monday next;" an editorial rebuke to a contemporary which had insinuated that the *EVENING POST* possibly manufactured a newsletter that appeared in its columns the evening before; and the advertisements of stage-coach lines between New York and Buffalo, Philadelphia and other points North, West and South. The spirit of partisanship in national affairs so seriously deplored in "The Embargo," seems to be manifesting itself now in State matters; and the *EVENING POST* calls one of its neighbors sharply to account for rejoicing over the probable rejection by the State Senate of the Governor's nomination of a resident physician for New York City, adding: "What can be more absurd, more repugnant to common sense, than to permit politics to have an influence over rational men when the health and safety of the community is concerned."

In the *EVENING POST* of the 11th of June, 1825, appears Fitz Greene Halleck's poem "Marco Bozarris," with the simple signature "H." The facts that Mr. Bryant was in some way connected with the first publication of this poem, and that it was printed in the *EVENING POST* shortly after its composition, have misled many persons to believe that it was written for this journal originally. The first editorial paragraph, however, of the number in which the stirring lyric occurs, will at once disabuse the reader's mind of that impression, and show just how much of a foundation in truth it had:

The New York Review and Atheneum Magazine.—We have had lying on our desk for some time, the first number of this work, and have, from day to day, intended, in compliance with our feelings, and a strong sense of duty, to express our opinion of its superior merits at some length, by way of urging it upon our readers to show a liberal patronage on the first buddings of a flower which gives promise that it will be an ornament to our city. We have not time to do this now; we will, therefore, only say, that its poetic department is supported in a style that extorts our unfeigned and unqualified admiration. As a specimen, we extract, this evening, an effusion of the loftiest character, entitled *Marco Bozarris*, the eminent beauties of which do not lie upon the surface, but with which, on every

new reading, we are charmed, and also surprised, that they had escaped us on a former perusal. We shall take an early opportunity to give another piece from this number, entitled *Pitcairn's Island*—one of the sweetest pictures that a highly cultivated fancy ever drew."

A later number of the *EVENING POST* fulfilled the promise of this closing sentence, and copied Mr. Bryant's "Song of Pitcairn's Island," with its modest signature "B."

The galaxy of talent engaged in this literary enterprise, though it included such bright, particular stars as Willis, Dana and Bancroft, beside Halleck and Bryant, could not save it from the fate which has swallowed up many another setting out with the brightest prospects. Mr. Bryant and his associate did not continue their labors many months; and in the *EVENING POST* of the 17th of March, 1826, we find a card, copied from the latest number of the *New York Literary Gazette*, and signed by James G. Brooks and George Bond, announcing the union of the two periodicals, conducted by them respectively, in one, to bear the joint name, *The New York Literary Gazette and American Atheneum*. In July of the same year this magazine was consolidated with the *United States Literary Gazette*, the lesser title being sunk in the greater, and in September the *United States Literary Gazette* lost its identity in turn and became the *United States Review*, with simultaneous publication in New York and Boston.

In 1826, Bryant was invited to share with Coleman the editorship of the *EVENING POST*, and soon made his utterances a matter of political and social consequence.

The story of his long connection with the newspaper press, and the course which his own sheet followed during that period, will be told in its proper place. We may remark here, however, that his notion of the educational aspects of journalism extended to the forms of literary expression as well as to the collection of facts and the moulding of public opinion. On the 11th of May, 1827, the *EVENING POST* contained the following editorial paragraph, which there is every reason to ascribe to its late chief:

"*Affectations of Expression.*—We are tired of the affectations which are often to be met with in some of our newspapers, and cannot but ex-

press a hope that they will be totally discarded, since they cannot be justified—such, for instance, as ‘over,’ a signature, in the Washington newspapers; ‘consolate,’ in those of Kentucky; ‘was being built,’ a late innovation of some English authors, and copied here; ‘the Misses Gillingham,’ in several publications. These are all that offer themselves at this time, and ought to be corrected, as being neither correct English nor pleasant to the ear, nor expressive of any new idea.”

This was but the beginning of a half century’s crusade against inelegance and inaccuracy in the use of our mother tongue. Outside of the line of his professional duty he sometimes wielded his literary pruning knife, and, as an example of the good use he made of it, we may quote this letter, which was sent to a young man who asked for a criticism upon an article he had written :

“My young friend, I observe that you have used several French expressions in your letter. I think if you will study the English language that you will find it capable of expressing all the ideas that you may have. I have always found it so, and in all that I have written I do not recall an instance where I was tempted to use a foreign word but that, on searching, I have found a better one in my own language.

“Be simple, unaffected; be honest in your speaking and writing. Never use a long word when a short one will do as well.

“Call a spade by its name, not a well-known oblong instrument of manual labor; let a home be a home and not a residence; a place, not a locality, and so on of the rest. When a short word will do you will always lose by a long one. You lose in clearness; you lose in honest expression of meaning; and, in the estimation of all men who are capable of judging, you lose in reputation for ability.

“The only true way to shine, even in this false world, is to be modest and unassuming. Falsehood may be a thick crust, but in the course of time truth will find a place to break through. Elegance of language may not be in the power of us all, but simplicity and straightforwardness are.”

Beside his regular journalistic duties, Bryant found time to do a good deal of literary work. He was associated with Verplanck and Robert C. Sands in editing the *Talisman*, a very successful annual, during the years from 1827 to 1830. He also contributed two stories, entitled respectively “Medfield” and “The Skeleton’s Cave” to the “*Tales of the Glauber Spa*,” a compilation including in its list of authors Messrs.

Paulding, Leggett and Sands, and Miss Sedgwick. In 1832, the literary circle with which he was most intimately connected was broken by the death of Sands, and Verplanck and Bryant jointly edited his works.

In the same year a complete edition of Bryant’s poems was published in New York, and Mr. Verplanck, who was acquainted with Washington Irving, then Secretary of the American Legation in London, sent a copy to the latter, with a private note requesting his patronage in introducing the young poet to the British public. Irving undertook the task with an almost affectionate interest, although his literary ward was quite unknown to him. With the little volume of verses in his pocket, he traversed the streets of London seeking a publisher. Murray was visited in due course. He ran his thumb over the edge of the pages, glanced at a line here and another there, paused a moment over a stanza that caught his eye with some familiar name, and then handed the book back. “Thank you, no,” he said, with a polite smile. “Poetry does not sell at present; I don’t think I can use this.” Murray was a man who always had money to invest in a work that showed any promise of success, and a less persistent advocate than Irving would have left his presence with a sinking heart. Not so Geoffrey Craycn, Gent. To his credit be it said that when he could not get what he wanted he resolved to take the next best thing; and after a tedious hunt he hit upon a bookseller in Bond street, named Andrews, who looked askance at the venture, but agreed to go into it if Irving would put his own name on the title page of the book as editor. The offer was accepted under the impression that the editor’s duties would be merely nominal. Delusive hope! The loyal Briton had got his types almost ready for the press, when he drove in hot haste to Mr. Irving’s house one morning, and requested a moment’s interview.

“This will never do, sir!” he cried, with some warmth. “We cannot sell a dozen copies in all England if this stands as it is now. It would be as much as my trade is worth to let such a thing go out of my shop!”

Irving, much astounded at the excitement manifested by his visitor, followed the latter’s

index finger with his eye, and read the line on which it rested—

"The British soldier trembles"—

in the "Song of Marion's Men."

"There, sir," continued Mr. Andrews, in the triumphant tone of a man who has carried conviction to the mind of an adversary in debate, "what do you think of that?"

"Well," said Irving, "what do you suggest?"

"You must alter it, sir; you must cut out either the 'British soldier,' or the 'trembles'—I don't care which. There are the seeds of war in the line as it stands, and I would rather destroy the whole edition than put my name on it as it is now."

Irving could ill conceal a grimace of amusement at the mountain that had grown up in this patriot's mind from so little a molehill; but his merriment changed to indignation when the bookseller picked out three or four other lines which could possibly be tortured into a slur upon British bravery, and demanded that they also be "edited" with severity. After an extended colloquy, a compromise was reached, Irving agreeing to remodel—

"The British soldier trembles"—

so that it should read—

"The foe-man trembles in his camp—"

and to make an insignificant alteration in another place, in deference to the supposed sensitiveness of the British public a half century after Marion's men had beaten their swords into ploughshares and resumed the arts of peace.

This first London edition was dedicated by Irving to Samuel Rogers, the poet, in a note, saying that, during an intimacy of some years' standing, the writer had remarked the interest which Rogers had taken in the rising fortunes and character of America, and the disposition he had to foster American talent, whether in literature or art: "The descriptive writings of Mr. Bryant," the note goes on, "are essentially American. They transport us into the depths of the solemn, primeval forest—to the shores of the lonely lake—to the banks of the wild, nameless stream, or the brow of the rocky upland, rising like a promontory from amidst a wide ocean of foliage; while they shed around us the glories

of a climate fierce in its extremes, but splendid in all its vicissitudes." The volume was generously reviewed by John Wilson in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and from that day Bryant had a European reputation.

In 1825 the Sketch Club was founded in New York, as a social reunion of artists and amateurs. Among its original members were Morse, Verplanck, Weir, Huntington, Ingraham, Wall, Durand, Cummings, Inman, Verbruyck, Agate Cole and Gourlie. To several of these, and also to sundry members of the Academy of Design, Bryant sat for his portrait. Morse's painting was preserved in the Academy's collection; Inman's was engraved for the *Democratic Review*, and one by Gray went into the possession of the New York Historical Society. This was not the only encouragement given to art by the young poet and journalist. When the Academy of Design was in its infancy, one of its duties was the support of a series of lectures on various subjects pertaining to art, partly for the benefit of its own members, but more particularly for the advantage of persons who were studying art as an occupation for life; and Bryant delivered a course on Greek and Roman Mythology—the fruits of the deep research in classic lore which began with his school days, had continued with unabated interest up to that time, and found a fitting conclusion, when the scholar was well on toward eighty years of age, in the translation of Homer's immortal epics. Although a connoisseur in art, Bryant never owned a very large collection of pictures or statuary, enjoying the study of a painting or a marble quite as much in the possession of a friend as if it ornamented his own drawing-room.

Soon after Bryant came to New York, Cooper went to Europe and travelled for some years. When he returned he selected Cooperstown, N. Y., for his home, so that in his later life he and Bryant saw little of each other. Then occurred that battle of words between the novelist and the newspaper press which some of our older readers will doubtless recall, in which Mr. Cooper exhibited a good deal of unnecessary spleen. Bryant, though conducting a journal which was looked to as an authority in matters of literary news and criticism, forbore to take any

part in the quarrel, loyalty to his friend on the one side and to his adopted profession on the other disposing him to maintain a dignified silence.

Mr. Coleman's death, in 1829, left Mr. Bryant in sole editorial control of the *EVENING POST*, and he shortly after engaged as an assistant William Leggett, a young journalist of some reputation for both industry in the routine duties of his profession and a rather aggressive advocacy of any cause which had awakened his interest. Having been made a zealous freetrader and democrat by his chief, this gentleman became one of the proprietors of the journal. This left Mr. Bryant free to think of some other things beside daily labor at the desk, and in 1834 he sailed for Europe with his family, intending to pass a few years in literary study at the foreign capitals, and superintend the education of his children. He travelled extensively for two years in France, Italy and Germany, and was enjoying his recreation to the utmost when news reached him from America that Mr. Leggett was very ill. Returning home with all haste, he arrived in New York just in time to check the *EVENING POST* in a career of adversity, brought upon it by the unnecessary vehemence with which its temporary conductor thrust sundry unpopular opinions of his own in the faces of its readers and advertisers. Convinced by this experience that what one wants done well he must do himself, and having to unravel, tediously, the entanglements into which his partner had led their journal, Mr. Bryant made no further attempt at a tour of the old world till 1845, though in the meantime he visited various parts of his own country, including Florida and the Valley of the Mississippi.

On his second voyage to Europe he was accompanied by his friend, Mr. Charles M. Leupp, a wealthy merchant of this city and a connoisseur and patron of the fine arts. Edward Everett, who was then the American minister at the court of St. James, gave a breakfast in his honor, at which were present Thomas Moore, Kenyon, and Samuel Rogers. A friendship sprang up at once between Rogers and Bryant, which lasted until the death of the former. It began when Bryant remarked to the older poet that he had brought a letter of introduction to him which he

would have the honor to present, and was interrupted by a kindly wave of the hand and the reply, "It is quite unnecessary. I have long known you through your writings." These cordial words were followed by an invitation to breakfast with Rogers, which was promptly accepted; and at his friend's board he made the acquaintance of Poole, the author of "Paul Pry," Sir Charles Eastlake and Richard Moncton Milnes, now Lord Houghton.

When he was about leaving England after this visit, Rogers bade him farewell with no little emotion, saying that they would never meet again. On his return a few years later he reminded Rogers of this. "I remember it," was the answer; "I have no business here; but I shall not stay long." This was indeed their last interview.

It was not till after his second sojourn in Europe that Mr. Bryant set about the improvement of his newly purchased country house at Roslyn, L. I., now known as "Cedarmere." The building was put up in 1787 by Richard Kirk, a Quaker, whose taste was satisfied with a simple square structure containing a number of large rooms. Under a later owner a portico was added, adorned with a heavy cornice and columns. When Mr. Bryant came into possession of the property, he took away these sombre ornaments and filled their places with a lattice-work for training vines upon, threw out bay windows on either side, and added some irregular outbuildings. Thus it remains. Of late years, its owner has divided his summers between Roslyn and Cummington, entertaining his city friends, and taking an active part in both places in all the village enterprises which look to the moral or intellectual culture of the people. Voice and purse have always been enlisted without difficulty in aid of any movement to better the condition of his "fellow townsmen" of a season, as the public institutions endowed by him in both places will testify.

The Atlantic was crossed for the last time in the year 1867, but not until a more thorough acquaintance with the eastern half of this country and with Cuba had been gained by a long and careful personal survey of them.

Each of the foreign tours mentioned in this

sketch has borne abundant fruit for the public. Letters were sent from every important place to the *EVENING POST*, and many of these were afterward gathered into books for preservation; but even more practical results may be found in the first suggestion of a great park for this city, a project conceived by Mr. Bryant during his earliest travels abroad, and taking shape, after many modifications, in the Central Park as we now have it. The site which commended itself to him at first was Jones's Woods; but this seemed for some reasons ineligible, and was relinquished in favor of a point more easy of access from all parts of Manhattan Island.

The nickel cent in our coinage owes its origin to a desire of Mr. Bryant's, after his first visit to Germany, to replace the old fashioned copper cent with something more nearly resembling the kreutzer.

In the course of his long career as a journalist and man of letters, the subject of this sketch was frequently called upon to deliver addresses in memory of distinguished persons with whom he had been associated. The funeral of Cole, the artist, in 1848, was probably the first occasion of this sort. Four years later he delivered a discourse on the life and writings of James Fenimore Cooper, and in 1860 paid a like tribute to the departed Irving. At the dedication of the Morse, Shakspeare, Scott, Goethe and Halleck monuments in the Central Park, also, he was a prominent speaker. His last effort, as our readers know, was in honor of Mazzini, the Italian statesman.

Beside the editions of his poems which have already been named in this article there was one entitled "The Fountain and Other Poems," published in 1842; and another in 1844, under the title, "The White-Footed Deer and Other Poems." In 1846 all his poems were collected and printed in Philadelphia in handsome style, with illustrations by the artist Leutze. In 1855, a two volume edition appeared; in 1863, the "Thirty Poems" latest produced by his pen; in 1870, his translation of the *Iliad*, and in 1871, the *Odyssey*; and in 1876, a very fine illustrated edition brought his poetical works down to that date. His letters from foreign parts have appeared under the titles, "Letters of a Traveller" and

"Letters from Spain," with the exception of those written from Mexico in the winter of 1871-2. The latest prose work which bears his name is a "History of the United States," now in course of publication.

Though often solicited, Mr. Bryant steadily refused to accept any public office higher than that of Justice of the Peace, save the purely honorary one of Presidential Elector in 1860. He was once offered a place on the Board of Regents of the University, but declined it. Presidents Lincoln and Grant are said also to have mentioned his name in connection with important foreign missions, but he could not be induced to permit the nomination to come before the Senate.

Retiring in disposition even to the point of bashfulness, he avoided notoriety of all sorts, and until within comparatively recent years fled from every danger of "lionizing." When he was at last forced to submit to the popular demand and appear as the chief figure on occasions of social importance, he used to surprise all observers by the diffidence with which he met the well-intended but often effusive advances of strangers, and the joy he would manifest at coming again into the narrow circle of personal friendship and out of the noise of the crowd.

In 1864, the Century Club, of which he was one of the earliest members, celebrated the seventieth anniversary of his birth with a festival, the proceedings of which were published in a little volume. In 1874, the entire press of the country united with the citizens of New York in another birthday celebration, whose chief outcome was the presentation to the aged poet, two years afterward, of a beautiful silver vase, now in the possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

On these occasions were quoted by many a tongue and pen the well-known lines of Halleck's, as beautifully true to-day as when their author first committed them to paper:

"Bryant, whose songs are thoughts that bless
The heart—its teacher and its joy,
As Mothers blend with their caress
Lessons of truth and gentleness
And virtue for the listening boy.
Spring's lovelier flowers for many a day
Have blossomed on his wandering way,
Beings of beauty and decay.
They slumber in their autumn tomb;
But those that graced his own Green River
And wreathed the lattice of his home,
Charmed by his song from mortal doom,
Bloom on, and will bloom on forever."

THE MAN OF LETTERS.

BY EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

I.

The general pause and hush, in this reanimate season, show us how deep and positive is the feeling created by the loss of such a man as William Cullen Bryant. Not a feeling of unexpectedness, though it well might be—for so live and free from decrepitude his old age has seemed, that we thought a deity more potent than Aurora had bestowed upon him the gift of immortality without decay. Not of sorrow, for he lived beyond the usual range of life, and long has been among us like one already transfigured. Not the feeling which arises when some man of rank, office, entanglement in great affairs, suddenly has passed away; no vast disturbance in matters of national or civic moment is caused by his departure, nor of this could it be said that we found our lares shivered on the hearth,—

“The roof-tree fallen,—all
That could affright, appall!”

Yet the position of Bryant was absolutely unique, and his loss is something strange and positive. No other man could die for whose sake might be revived so aptly that Indian metaphor of the sound of the fall of a great oak in the still forest. He stood alone; in some respects an incomparable figure. He grew to be not only a citizen, journalist, thinker, poet, but the beautiful, serene, majestic ideal of a good and venerable man. The purpose of this article is to seek for a general estimate of his literary character and services. With these, and the acts of his life, the public is familiar as with the pictures of an open

gallery. A hundred pens are transcribing the record. His countrymen long have delighted to honor him, one and all. But every life, grand or little, has in the end a meaning, an essential quality of its own. To discover this, with the passing of such a writer as Bryant, the offices of the critic are called forth with into service. He is at his post, and of counsel for the inheritors; since, when poets and thinkers die, they, like the Cæsars, make the people at large their heirs.

And in the present exercise of his office, the critic, however sudden the call, well may be more clear and settled in judgment than when regarding others whose work was long since ended. For the writer we now mourn has been before the world from a time near the beginning of the century, and so changeless through all changes that in estimating the poet just dead we really are judging the poet of fifty years ago, and scarcely are attempting to forecast the verdict of time upon his gift and its manifestations.

II.

Howsoever this and that writer may differ between themselves as to the measure of Bryant's faculties, and of Bryant the man, one thing is sure:—no ordinary personage can gain and retain to the last so extraordinary a hold upon human interest, affection, reverential esteem. Others, endowed with length of years, have had their rise and decline, outlasting themselves, and finding occasion to declare with Cato Major, “It is a hard thing, Romans, to render an account before the men of a period different from that in

which one has lived!" But here was one who, by that subtle process through which certain men come at the end even more fully to their own, steadily grew to be the individual emblem of our finest order of citizenship, possibly its rarest and most acceptable type. This, as constantly was evident, became impressed even upon coarse and ordinary persons, singly or associated in office,—scarcely judges, one would think, of such a matter, but accepting without cavil the popular conception and the estimate of the thoughtful and refined.

Now, there is sound reasoning at the base of every sustained opinion of this sort. What thing gave Bryant just this shade of special eminence? Not alone that he was a wise, good, virtuous man; not that he was a patriot, in the deepest and broadest sense; not that he was a journalist, however strong and notable; not merely that he was a clear and vigorous writer or original sayer and thinker; nor even because he was a serene and reverend old man, most sound of body and mind. True he was all these, and in their combination occupied a rank excelled by none and attained only by the excepted few. But beyond and including all these he was a poet. To the lasting praise and glory of the art of song it may be said that being an American of those distinguished attributes, the superaddition of the poetic gift made him a bright particular star. Above all, then, it is as a poet that we should observe and estimate him. In what did the quality and limitations of his poetic genius consist?

Yet again, in order justly to answer this question, he must be studied not only as an American poet who represents his country and his time, but as a man who represents himself. With respect to the former, he cannot but represent them. But the critic is wrong who asserts that a poet can do no more. He can mould them, certainly can anticipate them and even prophecy of their future; furthermore, he may express his own nature and originality in a way differing from theirs, in some fashion to which they have not yet attained.

And in this wise first seeking a key to his poetic value, we say that he had grown to be a most satisfying type of our ideal citizen, joining

for us the traditional gravity, purity and patriotic wisdom of the forefathers with the modernness and freshness of our own day. His life, public and private, was in exact keeping with his speech and writings. We often say of a poet or artist that he should not be judged like other men by his outward irrelevant mark or habitude; that to see his best, his truest self, you must read his poem or study his paintings. But in reading Bryant's prose and verse, and in observing the poet himself, our judgments were the same. Always he held in view liberty, law, wisdom, piety, faith; his sentiment was unsentimental; he never whined or found fault with condition or nature; he was virile, but not tyrannical; frugal, but not too severe; grave, yet full of shrewd and kindly humor. Absolute simplicity characterized him. Ethics were always in sight. He was a stoic in the generous, Christian meaning of the term, his bearing in our modern life being somewhat comparable to that of Antoninus in the antique. He was, indeed, an "old man for counsel;" what he learned in youth from the lives and precepts of Washington, Hamilton and their compeers, that he taught and practised to the last. His intellectual faculties, like his physical, were balanced to the discreetest level, and this without abasing his poetic fire. His genius was not shown by the advance of one faculty and the impediment of others; it was the spirit of an even combination, and a fine one.

It seemed as if it was with a gracious and instinctive sense of the fitness of things that he latterly bore his picturesque and stately part in the festivals and processions of our social life. To this extent he was conventional, but he made conventionalism itself imaginative and the renewer of thought and art.

III.

Here, then, has gone from us a minstrel who, in appearance, more than others of a strictly lyrical genius, was the very semblance of the legendary bard of Gray:

"The poet stood
(Loose his beard and hoary hair
Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air),
And with a master's hand and prophet's fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre!"

Look at the extent of the period through which he flourished. He began in the early springtime of Wordsworth, and long outlived new men like Baudelaire and Poe. The various epochs of his career do not affect this examination of its product, which, after his escape from the manner of Pope, was of an even quality during seventy years. In this he was fortunate and unfortunate. The former, because his early pieces were so noteworthy that, in the dearth of American poetry, they at once became home classics for a homely people; they passed into the few school readers then compiled, and one generation after another learned them admiringly by heart. At this time, even though composed in the latter-day fashion and of equal merit with Bryant's, an author's pieces might not obtain for him such recognition of fame. But his genius, owing to this otherwise good fortune, worked under restrictions from which it never was measurably freed. These we presently shall consider. Meantime it again may be noted that his poetic career had neither rise, height, nor decline. He formed certain methods wholly natural to him, in early youth, and was at once as admirable a poet as he ever afterwards became. Throughout his prolonged term of life he sang without haste or effort and always expressed himself rather than the varying theories of the time.

From the outset he was in full sympathy with the aspect, feeling and aspirations of his own land and people. His tendency and manner were determined during the idyllic period of this Republic, when nature, and the thoughts which she suggested, were themes for poets, rather than the dramatic relations of man with man. His sentiment was affected by the meditative verse of Cowper and Wordsworth, who rose above didacticism, or made it etherial and imaginative by rare poetic insight. Emerson said of Bryant, when the Century Association met to celebrate the latter's seventieth year, "This native, original, patriotic poet. I say original: I have heard him charged with being of a certain school; I heard it with surprise, and asked, what school? For he never reminded me of Goldsmith, or Wordsworth, or Byron, or Moore. I found him always a true painter of the face of this country, and of the sentiments of his own people." This is finely

said, and in a sense true; yet there can be little doubt that in some respects Wordsworth was the master of his youth. All pupils must acknowledge masters at the beginning, but Murillo was Murillo none the less, although he ground colors for Castillo and studied with Velasquez. Bryant, it is true, ground his colors in the open air. His originality consisted in deriving from his studies a method natural to his own genius and condition. And it is of interest to recall that the elder Dana describes him as saying that, "upon opening Wordsworth, a thousand springs seemed to gush up at once in his heart, and the face of Nature of a sudden to change into a strange freshness and life." Certainly he was not cradled into poetry by wrong, nor perturbed by the wild and morbid passions of a wayward youth. We can imagine him a serious and meditative lad, directed by the guidance of a scholarly father, well versed in the favorite poets of that day, Pope, Thomson, Akenside, Cowper—and at first accepting them as models; finally, obtaining for himself the clues to a true perception of nature, and with his soul suddenly exalted by a sense of her "something far more deeply interfused."

His blood was stirred by the landscape, throughout the changing year, of the pastoral region of Massachusetts in which he had his growth. Three of Hugo's works illustrate the three grand conflicts by which man progresses to his enfranchisement—conflicts with nature, tyranny and society. From the second of these opponents our fathers fled to a new continent, choosing to found a nationality, and entering upon that primeval conflict with nature which to an already civilized people is not without its compensation. It results, like a quarrel between generous lovers, with a betrothal of the one to the other, and of such an alliance Bryant was our high-priest. The delights of nature, and the awe and mystery of life and death, withdrew him from the study of the individual world. Thus he became a philosophic minstrel of the woods and waters, the foremost of American landscape-poets. In the contact with primeval nature, man signalizes his victories by educating and rendering more beautiful his captive; she, in turn, gains a potent influence over him, for a long while driving her rivals from

his heart, and compels him in his art and song to express her features and her inspiration. Therefore the first enduring American school of painting was a landscape school, and only at this moment are we groping our way to an idyllic, then to a more dramatic, method in art.

There is a sweet analogy between the poetry of Bryant and the broad, cool canvas of the founders of our landscape school—the works of Durand, Cole, Kensett, Inness, various as they may be in depth, tranquility, or imaginative power—such a harmony as exists between the soil, the climate, the fauna and the flora of an isothermal zone. There can be no doubt that Bryant, who at once became eminent in his special walk, therein has excelled, has outlasted, and will outlast, all his compeers and followers. Others group together details, compose with true enthusiasm, but are deficient in tone, sentiment, imaginative receptivity. Tone is the one thing needful to a true interpretation of nature. Thoreau felt this when he wrote in his diary: “I have just heard the flicker among the oaks on the hillside ushering in a new dynasty.

* * Eternity could not begin with more security and momentousness than the Spring. All sights and sounds are seen and heard both in time and eternity; and when the eternity of any sight or sound strikes the eye and ear, they are intoxicated with delight. * * * *It is not important that the poet should say some particular thing, but that he should speak in harmony with nature. The tone and pitch of his voice is the main thing.*” It is true that Bryant is, in one respect, unmodern. Thoreau, despite his own language, caught and observed every detail. Our poet’s learning was not scientific; he lacked the minor vision which, an added gift, makes Tennyson and others give such charm and variety to their work. The ancients knew fewer colors than ourselves. Byron, among moderns, painted nature in her simple, broad manifestations—the sea, the mountains, the sky—subordinating her spirit to his own passion, as Bryant allies it with his own tenderness and wisdom,—but even he was not her poet in the delicate, microcosmic, recent sense. Both certainly lacked the exact cleverness and infinite variety of the new school. Bryant regarded nature in its phe-

nomenal aspect, careless of scientific realities. What he gained in this wise was the absence of disillusionizing fact, and a fuller understanding of the language of nature’s “visible forms;” what he lost was the wide and various range opened by the endless avenues of new-found truth.

IV.

And right here it is well for us to observe the limitations of his genius as a poet: limitations so well-defined as to be a stumbling-block in the way of those who lightly examine it, and sometimes to have thrown him out of the sympathetic range of elegant and impartial minds. His longevity was not allied with intellectual quickness and fertility, but seemed almost to be the physiological result of inborn slowness and deliberation. He was not flexible, facile of ear and voice. He consorted with nature in its still or majestic moods, and derived wisdom and refreshment from its tenderness and calm. His genius, as expressed by its product, was not affluent, and scarcely availed itself of his length of years. His reticence in verse seemed habitual. In old age, poets are apt to write the most, and often to the least advantage, but his pen through much of this period was chiefly devoted to translation. How little of his own poetry he produced in seventy years! A few thin volumes. Think of Milton, Landor, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Hugo, Longfellow—of the impetuous work of Scott and Byron—of what Shelley, who gave himself to song, accomplished before he died at twenty-nine. Bryant was thought to be cold, if not severe, of temperament. The most fervent social passions of his song are those of friendship, of filial and fraternal love; his intellectual passion is always under restraint, even when moved by patriotism, liberty, religious faith. There is still less of action and dramatic quality in his verse. Humor, the overflow of strength, is almost absent from it, or, when present, sufficiently awkward; yet it should be noted that in conversation, or in the after-dinner talks and speeches so frequent in his later years, his humor was continuous and charming—full of kindly gossip, wisdom and mirth. He made, as we have seen, little advance upon the early standard of his

work. It would seem as if, under the lessons of a father, "who taught him the value of correctness and compression, and enabled him to distinguish between poetic enthusiasm and fustian," he there and then matured, reached a certain point, and became set and stationary. There are few notable expressions and separable lines in his poetry. Finally, it has been observed that his diction, when not confined to that Saxon English at every man's use, is somewhat bald and didactic,—always admirable and sententious, but less frequently rich and full. He had a limited vocabulary at command; I should think that no modern poet, approaching him in fame, has made use of fewer words. His range is like that of Goldsmith, restricted to the simpler phrases of our tongue. Other poets, of an equally pure diction, show here and there, by rare and fine words, the extent of their unused resources, and that they voluntarily confine themselves to "the strength of the positive degree."

In the face of all this, Bryant's poetry has had, and will continue to have, a lasting charm for many of the noblest minds. Since this is not due to his length of years—for he is not alone in that possession—nor to richness of detail and imagery—nor because, like Whittier, he has adapted himself to successive changes of thought and diction,—how is it that his genius triumphs over its confessed limitations? To understand this, his poetry must be judged as a whole, and not by its affluence or flexibility; and it is, we say, eminently of that kind which must be studied in connection with its author's surroundings and career.

V.

Be it again remembered, that he was the creature of our early period. He did not give himself to poetry, but added poetry to his allotted life and habitude. The reverse of this, only, can make the greatest poet. Art is a jealous mistress. His lack of devotion to her was the fault of his time, and of circumstances which decided his course in life. To him the parting of the ways came early; and what was there in our literary atmosphere and opportunities, sixty years ago, to make a poet for life of any thorough-trained, aspiring and resolute man? The nation called

for workers, journalists, practical teachers. If, after accomplishing their daily tasks, they found time to sing a song, it thanked them and did little more. Poetry was the surpluse of Bryant's labors, or, more likely, their restoring complement. Possibly, the beauty of his rarest nature would not have expressed itself in song but for the influence of those early readings under a discerning father's care. Otherwise, though he could not have failed to become a writer, as a poet he might have been one of those mute oracles whose lot was mourned by Wordsworth:

"Oh! many are the poets that are sown
By Nature; men endowed with highest gifts,
The vision and the faculty divine;
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,
Which, in the docile season of their youth,
It was denied them to acquire."

But read "The Evening Wind," see him in his most spontaneous mood, and you feel that, once having learned the art of verse, all the poet within him thereafter must break out from time to time in song. He did not hoard his reputation. But his passion and tenderness did not so readily force him to metrical expression as a feeble amount of either forces many a lesser but more facile singer trained in a less rude and unpoetic age.

On the other hand, he never, by any chance, affected passion or set himself to artificial song. He had the triple gift of Athene, "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control." He was incapable of affecting raptures that he did not feel, and this places him far above a host of singers who, without knowing it, hunt for themes and make poetry little better than a trade. As for his diction, he began when there was no feast of Pentecost with its gift of tongues. I think that the available portion of a poet's vocabulary is that which he acquires in youth, during his formative period. Is it harder for an adult to learn a foreign language than to enlarge greatly his native range of words, and have them at every-day command? Bryant's early reading was before the great revival which brought into use the romance-words of Chaucer, Spencer, and the Elizabethan age. It was chiefly derived from the poorest, if the smoothest, English period—that which began with Pope and ended with Cowper. The possibilities of a wider training are visible in Tennyson, who had Keats

and Shelley for his predecessors; not to consider Swinburne, who, above his supernatural gifts of rhythm and language, owes much to his youthful explorations in classic and continental tongues. No doubt Bryant's models confirmed his natural restrictions of speech. But even its narrow range has made his poetry strong and pure; and now, when expression has been carried to its extreme, it is an occasional relief to recur to the clearness, to the exact appreciation of words, discoverable in every portion of his verse and prose. It is like a return from a florid renaissance to the earliest antique; and indeed there was something Doric in Bryant's nature. His diction, like his thought, often refreshes us as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He refused to depart from what seemed to him the natural order of English verse, that order which comes to the lips of childhood, and is not foreign to any life or age. The thought was like the measure, that which was old with the fathers, and is young in our own time, the pure philosophy of nature's lessons. Give his poems a study, and their simplicity is their charm. How easy it seems to write those natural lines! Yet it is harder than to catch a hundred fantastic touches of word-painting and dexterous sound. He never was obscure, because he dared not and would not go beyond his proper sight and knowledge, and this was the safeguard of his poetry, his prose, and of his almost blameless life.

His work is the reverse of "art for art's sake,"—which too often bears to "art for expression's sake" the relation of "literary painting" to the painting which is executed with a master hand and eye. Verse, to Bryant, was the outflow of his deepest emotions; a severe taste and discreet temperament made him avoid the study of decoration. Thus, he was always direct and intelligible, and appealed to the common people as strongly as to the select few. I have compared him to our stately men of an older time. Among others, Webster might be mentioned as one whose mood and rhetoric are in keeping with the poetry of Bryant. Like Webster, our poet always selected the leading, essential thought, and brushed the rest aside. This he put in with a firm and glowing touch. Many have thought the works of both the states-

man and the poet conventional, but to all simple and essential truth and diction, the adjective might be brought to apply. Adopting Arnold's distinction, we see that Bryant's simplicity was not *simplesse*, but *simplicité*. Everett pointed to the fact, that poetry, at its best, is "easily intelligible, touching the finest chords of taste and feeling, but never striving at effect. This is the highest merit in every department of literature, and in poetry it is well called inspiration. Surprise, conceit, strange combinations of imagery and expression, may be successfully managed, but it is merit of an inferior kind. The beautiful, pathetic and sublime, are always simple and natural, and marked by a certain serene unconsciousness of effort." "This," he added, "is the character of Mr. Bryant's poetry."

VI.

Let us again, then, observe its forms and themes, and discover clues to the essential quality of the genius which idealized them. Bryant's chosen measures were very few and simple. Two were special favorites, most frequently used for his pictures of nature and his meditations on the soul of things, and in their use he was a master.

One is the iambic-quatrain, in octo-syllabic verse, of which the familiar stanza, "Truth crushed to earth will rise again," may be recalled as a specimen. Many of his best modern pieces are composed in this measure, so evenly and firmly that the slightest change would mar their sound and flow. "A Day Dream," written in the poet's old age, is perfect of its kind, and may rank with Collins's nonpareil, "To fair Fidele's Grassy Tomb." Witness such stanzas as these:

"I sat and watched the eternal flow
Of those smooth billows toward the shore,
While quivering lines of light below
Ran with them on the ocean-flow."

* * * *

"Then moved their coral lips; a strain
Low, sweet, and sorrowful, I heard,
As if the murmurs of its main
Were shaped to syllable and word."

His variations upon the iambic-quatrain, as in the celebrated poems, "To a Waterfowl," and "The Past," are equally successful. The second of the poems referred to is that blank-verse in which his supremacy always was recognized.

Several distinct phases of our grandest English measure have been observed in literature. 1. The Elizabethan, free and current, matchless for dramatic verse; 2. The Miltonic, or Anglo-Epic, in which Latin words and sonorous pauses and inversions are so frequent; 3. The Reflective, of which Wordsworth, succeeding the didacticians, held unquestioned control; 4. That of Tennyson, by turns epic and idyllic, combining Saxon strength and sweetness with a Greek heroic quality. Bryant's blank-verse may be numbered with the third of these classes, but from the outset was marked by a quality unquestionably his own. The essence of its cadence, pauses, rhythm, should be termed American, and it is the best ever written in the new world. Blank-verse is the easiest and the most difficult of all measures; the poorest in poor hands; the finest, when written by a true poet. Whoever essays it is a poet disrobed; he must rely upon his natural gifts, his defects cannot be hidden. But in this measure Bryant was at his height, and owes to it the most enduring portion of his fame. However narrow his range, we must own that he was first in the first. He reached the upper air at once in "Thanatopsis," and again and again, though none too frequently, he renewed his flights, and, like his own waterfowl, "pursued his solitary way."

The finest and most sustained of his poems of nature are those written in blank verse. At intervals, so rare throughout his life as to resemble the seven-year harvests, or the occasional wave that overtops the rest, he composed a series of those pieces which now form a unique panorama of nature's aspects, moving to the music of lofty thoughts and melodious words. Such are "A Winter Piece," the "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," "A Forest Hymn," "Summer Wind," "The Prairies," "The Fountain," "Hymn of the Sea," "A Rain-Dream;" also a few written late in life, showing that the eye of the author of "Thanatopsis" had not been dimmed nor his natural force abated,—these are "The Constellations," "The Night Journey of a River," and "Among the Trees." In all the treatment is large and ennobling, and distinctly marks each as Bryant's. The method, that of invocation, somewhat resembles the manner of Coleridge's

"Hymn to Mont Blanc;" when in a less enraptured strain, they exhibit repose, feeling, wise and reverent thought.

In the same eloquent, sonorous verse, and with like cæsural pauses and inflections, we find his more purely meditative poems, upon an equal or still higher plane of feeling. "Thanatopsis," the "Hymn to Death," "Earth," "An Evening Revery," "The Antiquity of Freedom," and one of his latest and longest, "The Flood of Years," Yet, in both his reflective verse and that devoted to nature, he often employed lyrical measures with equal excellence; as in the breezy, exquisite poem on "Life," "The Battle Field," "The Future Life, and "The Conqueror's Grave"—the latter one of his most elevating pieces. Especially in his lyrics he seemed like a wind-harp yielding tender music in response to every suggestion of the great mother whom he loved. Here he becomes one with her, and with all her moods and "visible forms." Such lyrics as "June," "The Death of the Flowers," and "The Evening Wind," show this, and also indicate the limits within which his song was spontaneous. Each is the genuine expression of a personal mood, and has by actual merit taken a permanent place in metrical literature.

VII.

At last, then, we are brought to a recognition of the power in Bryant's verse which has given him a station in the poetic hemicycle far above that which he could hope to win by its amount or range. It is the *elemental quality* of his song. Like the bards of old, his spirit delights in fire, air, earth, and water,—the apparent structures of the starry heavens, the mountain recesses, and the vasty deep. These he apostrophizes, but over them and within them he discerns and bows the knee to the omniscience of a protecting Father, a creative God. Poets, eminent in this wise, have been gifted always with *imagination*. The verse of Bryant often is full of high imaginings. Select any portion of "Thanatopsis:"

"Pierce the Barcan wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods,
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound
Save his own dashings—yet the dead are there!"

or this, from "The Prairies:—"

* * * * *

"The bee

Fills the savannas with his murmurings,
And hides his sweets, as in the golden age,
Within the hollow oak. I listen long
To his domestic hum, and think I hear
The sound of an advancing multitude
Which soon shall fill these deserts. From the ground
Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice
Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn
Of Sabbath worshippers. The low of herds
Blends with the rustling of the heavy grain
Over the dark-brown furrows. All at once
A fresher wind sweeps by and breaks my dream,
And I am in the wilderness alone."

Read the entire poem of "Earth." Then
such a stanza as this, from "The Past":

"Far in thy realm withdrawn
Old Empires sit in sullenness and gloom,
And glorious ages gone
Lie deep within the shadow of thy womb."

Such a phrase as

"Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste;"

or, from "A Rain-Dream," an impersonation of

"The Wind of Night,
A lonely wanderer between Earth and cloud,
In the black shadow and the chilly mist,
Along the streaming mountain-side, and through
The dripping woods, and o'er the plashy fields,
Roaming and sorrowing still, like one who makes
The journey of life alone, and nowhere meets
A welcome or a friend, and still goes on
In darkness."

Take passages like these—and they are frequent in Bryant's poetry—make allowance for the law by which any real poet's work is sure to grow upon us in close examination, and we still are confronted with an "elemental" imagination often higher than that of more productive poets. Younger singers excel in richness of phrase, redundant imagery, elaborate word-painting; but every period has its forerunners and masters, and our rising men must acknowledge Bryant as a laurelled master of the early American School. He seldom touched the keys, yet they gave out an organ tone.

Indeed, when he essayed piano-music, and was in a light or fanciful mood, he often was unable to vie with sprightlier and defter hands. His epics in swift and simple measures had a ringing quality, noticeable in "The Song of Marion's Men", the best of them—and in "The Hunter of the Prairies". A blithe surprise awaits us in

certain later pieces, such as "The Planting of the Apple-Tree," the delicate "Snow-Shower," and "Robert of Lincoln"—so full of bird-music and fancy. Usually, as we have seen, it was with an air of uncouthness and doubt that he ventured beyond established precedents, as if he were in strange waters and would gladly touch firm land,—but then, he seldom ventured. As he grew older, beyond the asperities of life, he became less brooding, sad and grave. His fancy, what there was of it, came in his later years, and suggested two of his longest pieces, "Sella" and "The Little Children of the Snow," tales of folk-lore, in which his lighter and more graceful handling of blank-verse may be studied with pleasure.

VIII.

In nothing was his wise self-judgment more evident—his exact measure of a prolonged mental and physical strength—than in the task of translating the epics of Homer, to which he successfully applied himself in his old age. The power that accomplished this was as wonderful as Lander's retention of creative energy. The limits of this paper will not permit of an analysis of this heroic performance. Some years ago, the present writer prepared an extended review of it for *The Atlantic Monthly*, in which its leading qualities were thought to be: First. Fidelity to the Homeric text; Second. The admirable manner in which the translator's characteristic blank-verse was sustained, with an increased element of flexibility, and without artifice, to the end of the long, immortal poems. It also was said that a demand for such a blank-verse rendering of Homer had existed previously, which not even Cowper had been able to meet. Lord Derby had failed from utter lack of the poetic gift. But the noblest blank-verse translation, even Bryant's, faithful as it was and in the grand manner, must lack the Homeric rush and swiftness, and must also become prosaic in its substitutes for the recurrent and connecting phrases of the Greek text. The conclusion was that no new English Homer would "tread upon the renown of Bryant's crowning work, until the English hexameter—with all its compensating qualities, by which alone we can preserve delicate shades of

meaning and the epic movement—has been firmly established among us, and a great poet, imbued with the classical spirit, has become its acknowledged master. Until then Bryant's translation has filled the literary void." The writer has seen no reason to change this estimate of the unequalled merits, and of what were the essential and unavoidable deficiencies, of Bryant's Homeric work. The tendency of his mind, even in its epic mood, was slow and stately, Latin rather than Greek. Hence, as a translator from the Spanish he was peculiarly successful, reproducing the calm and royal quality of Castilian song.

American poets—with pride be it remembered—ever have been true to their own land in expressing its innate freedom, patriotism, aspiring resolve. Throughout Bryant's life his scattered poems upon political events, at home and abroad, have been consecrated to freedom and its devotees. He breathed a spirit of independence with the wind of his native hills. The country is the open wild of liberty. All our poets of nature are poets of human rights. Should America ever become monarchical it will be due to the influence of cities and those bred in them. Bryant's regard for law, for the inheritance of just political and social systems, was unquestionable. He might have been a constitutionalist in France; here, though bred a federalist, he was sure to oppose undue centralization. After all, he was of no party further than he conceived it to be right. Witness his contest with slavery and his desertion of a democracy which finally, he thought, belied its name. That he did not, with Longfellow and Whittier, summon his muse to oppose the greatest wrong of our history was owing to two causes: First, it was his lyrical habit to observe and idealize general principles, the abstract rather than the concrete. Whittier's poems are alive with incident, and burn with personal feeling. Once, only, Bryant wrote a mighty poem on Slavery: when it had received its death-blow, when the struggle ended, and the right prevailed. Jehovah had conquered, His children were free, and Bryant raised a chant like that of Miriam:

"O, thou great Wrong, that, through the slow-paced years

Didst hold thy millions fettered;

* * * * *
 "Go, now, accursed of God, and take thy place
 With hateful memories of the elder time!

* * * * *
 "Lo! the foul phantoms, silent in the gloom
 Of the flown ages, part to yield thee room."

This swelling poem, "The Death of Slavery," was not needed to assure us that the cause of freedom touched his heart. For, secondly, his true counterpart to Whittier's work was to be found in the vigorous anti-slavery assaults he made for years in the journal of which he died the editor. There it was that he wreaked his influence and mental power upon "the rebuke of fraud and oppression of whatever clime or race."

His prose labors were an outlet, constantly afforded in his journalism, through which much of that energy escaped which otherwise would have varied the motives and increased the body of his song. It was in every way as perfect as his verse, as clearly prose as that was poetry. Few better writers of simple, nervous English. His phraseology was a well of English undefiled. He used it for half a century as the instrument of his every-day thought and purpose; as a leader-writer, a traveller and correspondent, an essayist and orator, a political disputant. His polemic vigor and acerbity were worked off in his middle-life editorials, and in defence of what he thought to be right. There he was indeed unyielding, and other pens recall the traditions of his political controversies. He never confused the distinct provinces of prose and verse. Refer to anything written by him, of the former kind, and you find plainness, virility, well-constructed syntax, free from any cheap gloss of rhetoric or the "jingle of an effeminate rhythm." For example, the preface to his "Library of Poetry and Song." This is a model of expressive English prose, as simple as that of the *Spectator* essayists and far more to the purpose. Like all his productions, it ends when the writer's proper work is done. The essay, it may be added, contains in succinct language the poet's own views of the scope and method of song, a reflection of the instinct governing his entire poetic career.

As in written prose and verse, so in speech and

public offices. The long series of addresses on civic occasions closed with one which brought him to his death. Mastering his work, in its integrity and brightness, to the very end, it was his lot at last to bow, as became a poet of Nature, before her own life-nurturing, life-destroying forces, and thus submit to her kindest universal law. The question of a passage in "An Evening Revery" is now answered, and the prophecy fulfilled:

"O thou great Movement of the Universe,
Or Change, or Flight of Time—for ye are one!
That bearest, silently, thy visible scene
Into night's shadow and the streaming rays
Of starlight, whither art thou bearing me?
I feel the mighty current sweep me on,
Yet know not whither. Man foretells afar
The courses of the stars; the very hour
He knows when they shall darken or grow bright;
Yet doth the eclipse of Sorrow and of Death
Come unforewarned!"

THE POET.

BY RICHARD HENRY STODDARD.

"Mr. Pope's father (who was an honest merchant and dealt in Hollands wholesale) was no poet, but he used to set him to make English verses when very young. He was pretty difficult in being pleased, and used to send him back to new turn them. 'These are not good rhymes;' for that was my husband's word for verses." So wrote the Rev. Joseph Spence about a hundred and fifty years ago, taking down the words as they dropped from the garrulous lips of Pope's good old mother, who idolized her famous son. This little anecdote occurs to me in writing about Bryant's poetry, the cultivation of which was sedulously fostered by his father, who was a physician of repute and a gentleman of education and literary tastes. The childhood of Bryant was spent in the town of Cummington, where he was born, and where there must have been a good school, if it be true, as Dr. Griswold says, that he made very creditable translations from the Latin poets at the age of ten. If I knew what books the library of Dr. Bryant contained, I could, I think, readily detect the influences that moulded his juvenile compositions. I assume that Pope was among the English poets whom he possessed, and Gray, and possibly Cowper, who passed from this troubled scene of existence when Master Bryant was about six years old. If Dr. Bryant cared for the native muse, he possessed Freneau (of whose poetical works three editions were published before the completion of the first decade of the present century), Trumbull's "McFingal," Dwight's "Conquest of Canaan," and "Greenfield Hill" (which was published in the

year that Bryant was born), and that once famous and speedily forgotten epic, Barlow's "Columbiad." He could not have learned much from any American poet that had yet appeared. He might have learned something, however, from Freneau, who was a popular poet on account of the Revolution, whose most prolific singer he had been. Patriotic verse was highly thought of then, and to have written against the bold Briton was to have effected a lodgment in public estimation. One element which runs through Freneau's poetry was before long to crop out in young Bryant's poetry. I mean Freneau's recognition of the fact that there were many things in the life of the Indians which were legitimate themes for poetic meditation. What I mean will be apparent to my readers if they will turn to Griswold's "Poets and Poetry of America," and glance over Freneau's "Dying Indian" and "The Indian Burying Ground." I would advise them to read the last carefully, if only for the music, which I think influenced Bryant at a later period. Campbell thought so well of this poem that he conveyed a line of it into his "O'Connor's Child." Bryant could not have missed the Indian element if he had read Dwight's "Greenfield Hill," a descriptive, historical and didactic poem which is divided into seven parts, and which must be tedious reading, if I may judge by the extracts quoted by Griswold. This element, thickly coated over with verbiage, informs a section of five stanzas descriptive of an Indian temple, and pads out a weak example of the noble measure of Spencer. Beside this measure and the sing-song

heroics of Pope, "Greenfield Hill" contains an example of American blank verse which is not to be commended. It is heavy, lumbering and unmusical.

Bryant's first appearance in print, outside of the "Poets' Corner" of the Northampton newspaper which printed his translations from the Latin poets, was in a little pamphlet of political verse. I have never seen it, and consequently know nothing about it beyond what I find in Griswold and Duyckinck. It was entitled "The Embargo," and was published in 1808, his fourteenth year. Griswold calls it a satire, and says it was directed against President Jefferson, who was probably not injured by it. He quotes eighteen lines, descriptive of an old-time caucus, and considers them remarkably spirited and graphic, a commendation in which I cannot concur. They are a clever imitation of the average evenly balanced manner of Pope, who was clearly the master to whom the young poet looked for *form*, no doubt at the suggestion of his father. The little Queen Anne's man had long been dethroned in England, but an old-fashioned country doctor in the northwest corner of Massachusetts was not sufficiently aware of that important fact in the history of English poetry. "The Embargo" reached a second edition, which was published in Boston in 1809, and contained an endorsement of the youth of its writer, which had been called in question by the *Monthly Anthology*. It also contained some additional pieces of verse, one of which on "Drought" is quoted by Duyckinck. It was written in Bryant's fifteenth year, and entirely from books. In other words, it is artificial, colorless, and of no poetical value. A great poet had been born in New England, but his first volume amounted to nothing, especially in the walk of song in which he was soon to be unrivalled. If he saw nature, it was not with his natural sight, but through the spectacles of books, and not the best books in the library of his father, if its shelves were enriched, as I think they were, with Cowper. A single page of "The Task," if he had had it, would, I am persuaded, have quickened his poetic vision, and revealed to him his intense love of the natural world.

The life of Bryant when it is written will fill

—at any rate it ought to fill—the intellectual blank which separates the publication of "The Embargo" from the writing of "Thanatopsis." I cannot fix the date of "Thanatopsis," nor the place where it was composed; but trusting Griswold, who could have had no motive for inaccuracy, it saw the light in manuscript shortly after Bryant had completed his eighteenth year. This young man in his nonage had done what many men never do at all—he had emancipated himself from books and models, and had discovered himself and his own originality. What Pope had been to him the short extract from "The Embargo" quoted by Griswold shows. What English poet inspired him next? One of the greatest of the moderns—Wordsworth. Strictly speaking I should not say that Wordsworth was an inspiration to him, but rather a discovery. He found in the blank verse of Wordsworth the clue which conducted him into the profoundest recesses of his being—the sacred places where Meditation sits in darkness brooding over the solemn mysteries of life and death. The two volumes of Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" were reprinted in Philadelphia in the eighth year of Bryant's age, but I doubt whether a copy of that edition found its way to Cummington, and, if one did, I am certain that Dr. Bryant did not know what to make of it. Wordsworth did not write for gentlemen cultured as he was, but for unconventional minds like his own. The boy Bryant would have seen nothing remarkable in his poetry; no boy, no young man has ever yet understood his serene and lofty genius. He touches, he moves no man until years have brought the philosophic mind. It comes to some early, to some late, to some not at all. It came to Bryant early, and it never left him. "Thanatopsis" struck the keynote of his genius, disclosed to him the growth and grandeur of his powers, and placed him, for what he was, before all American poets, past, present and to come.

"Thanatopsis" is to me the most remarkable poem that was ever written by a young man. I know of nothing like it in English literature, nothing that is at once so grave, so sustained, so mature, and so universal. The feeling which pervades it, the solemn reflection which inspires it, belongs to all humanity and all time, and is

apart from and beyond all religions. The truthful lesson of the nothingness of life is the silent teaching of nature. It could not have been written in the Old World, where the conception of the poet would have been limited by circumscribed areas of burial, and known periods of time. It demanded a New World, of vast dimensions and unknown antiquity, a primeval wilderness that was once populous with forgotten races of men. Such a world stretched from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Pacific at the beginning of the present century, and waited for a poet to grasp the secret of its solitude. The little churchyard at Stoke Pogis inspired Gray's immortal "Elegy;" the great tomb of man in the New World inspired Bryant's "Thanatopsis," which is larger than its inspiration, and, if a contemporary verdict is worth anything, will be as lasting as the language which it has enriched. "Thanatopsis" saw the light in print in the pages of the *North American Review* in 1817, but not entirely in the shape that we know it now. As I remember the first version, the first sixteen and the last fourteen lines were wanting: in other words, the poem began with the broken line, "Yet a few days, and thee," and ended with the broken line, "and make their bed with thee." As originally printed the poem opened with four four-line stanzas, which are far inferior to the solemn blank verse of which they were the prelude. They are as follows:

"Not that from life and all its woes
The hand of death shall set me free;
Not that this head shall then repose
In the low vale most peacefully.

"Ah, when I touch Time's farthest brink,
A kinder solace must attend;
It chills my very soul to think
On the dread hour when life must end.

"In vain the flattering verse may breathe
Of ease from pain, and rest from strife;
There is a sacred dread of death
Inwoven with the strings of life.

"This bitter cup at first was given,
When angry justice frowned severe;
And 'tis the eternal doom of Heaven
That man must view the grave with fear."

If we did not know that "Thanatopsis" was the work of a young man, we would never guess that such was the fact, it is so serious, so elevated, so noble. Bryant rises to his theme, putting off at once and forever all immaturity and uncer-

tainty of thought and expression, and speaks as one having authority. He is oracular in his knowledge of nature and her ministrations to man. She lives in his lines as in those of no other American poet, before or since. His lightest epithets are authentic, and his glances of observation unerring. He takes in everything at once, settles the value of all things, and reproduces a perfect whole, an imperative unity, large, imposing, imperishable.

The blank verse of "Thanatopsis" is masterly and original; I can trace the influence of no English poet in its varied pauses and musical cadences. With the exception of "The Ages," which stands at the head of the collected edition of "Bryant's Poems," his poems are arranged in the order in which they were written. "Thanatopsis" was followed by the simple and charming lines to "The Yellow Violet," the sentiment and melody of which are perfect. He returned then to his first love, blank verse, and wrote the faultless "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," in which he changes the broad style, the grand manner of "Thanatopsis," and descends to minutest details which are exceedingly picturesque, and everywhere subordinated to the main effect. A skillful painter ought to be able to put this immortal Wood on canvas; for it is already painted in words by a hand of a great master. Try to read any of Akenside's "Inscriptions" after this noble one and you will see how inferior they are. And they were once so famous! A pretty melodious "Song," of no great value, leads us to the unforgettable lines "To a Waterfowl," which were written, I imagine, on the seashore of Massachusetts. They were published in the *North American Review* in 1818, six months after "Thanatopsis," and were immediately recognized as the work of a great poet. The moralizing stanza at the close added weight, with minds of a certain cast, to the picturesque impressiveness of the poem. A comparison between the third line of the second stanza as it was originally printed and as it stands now is an instructive lesson in poetic art. The first version reads:

"As darkly painted on the crimson sky
Thy figure floats along."

Perfect, sang the chorus of reviewers, and were wrong, as Bryant saw, for a painted figure can

neither float nor appear to float. The second version runs:

"As darkly limned upon the crimson sky,"

which was open to the same objection as the first version. The line stands in the last edition:

"As darkly seen against the crimson sky,"

which is strictly true of a waterfowl floating against a background of twilight.

We come to minute picturesqueness in "Green River," and a lightness of touch we have never seen before. This poem is the most autobiographic that Bryant has written, in that it expresses his regret at his enforced absences from nature, and his dissatisfaction with the law, which was now his profession. "A Winter Piece" is doubly excellent—excellent as a leaf from the inner life of the poet, and excellent as a picture of the woods at all seasons, and a positive picture of the woods in winter. The thirty-seven lines beginning, "Come when the rains," are unequalled for brilliancy in the whole range of English poetry. "The West Wind" has no great value, although it is a pleasant lyric. "The Burial Place" is so good, that I wish Bryant had finished it, and taken the chances of being considered a plagiarist from Irving, who was not to be named in the same day with him. The lyrics "Blessed are they that mourn," and "No man Knoweth his Sepulchre," are at once strong, compact and graceful, and in a style which is Bryant's own. "A Walk at Sunset" interests me greatly, partly on account of its revelation of Bryant's poetic personality, and partly because it marks the appearance of a new element in his poetry, hints of which are to be found in Dwight's "Greenfield Hill," and in the "Indian Burying Ground" of Freneau—the element of Indian life softened by the mists of antiquity and the haze of poetic imagination.

"A Walk at Sunset" is an exquisitely tender picture of the Housatonic Valley as I have seen it on summer evenings at Stockbridge when it is suffused with yellow light, and the eastern heavens are colored rosily. The peculiar beauty of the landscape recalls the memory of those who looked upon it in earlier days, and who are not unnaturally supposed to have felt its calmness

and to have been won by its charm. The poet sees them in fancy, and reviews for the moment their pleasing belief that the souls of their warriors went to happy islands beyond the sunset, where the winds were at peace, the stars were fair,

"And purple-skirted clouds curtain the crimson air."

The poet's thoughts wander back to days before the red man came, when the deer fed in the shade, and no tree in the wilderness was felled except by the tooth of the beaver, the winds, or the rush of floods. Visions of their coming, their deeds in the chase and in war pass before his eyes, and he sees the green sod of the valley and the silvery waters of the river taking the first stains of blood. They are gone now, gone like the sunset, and night is pressing on. All that tells their story is the white bone which the plough strikes in the harvest field. The offspring of another race, he stands upon their ashes, beside a stream they loved; and where their night-fire showed the gray oaks by fits and their war-song rang, he teaches the quiet shades the strains of a new tongue. He bids the sun farewell; his light will shine on other changes, but he will never see those realms again,

"Darkened by boundless groves and roamed by savage men."

I have dwelt upon this element of Bryant's poetry because it appeared in no other American poet to the same extent and with the same force. His mind, always a tenacious one, never suffered it to escape, but referred to it in after years again and again. The publication of the poems that I have enumerated led the students of Harvard College to invite Bryant to recite a poem before them on Commencement Day. This was in 1821, his twenty-seventh year. He consented, and wrote the poem with which every edition of his poems commences, "The Ages." It is a rapid, comprehensive, philosophic and picturesque summary of the history of mankind from the earliest periods, a shifting panorama of good and evil figures and deeds, the rising and falling of religions, kingdoms, empires, and the great shapes of Greece and Rome. The twentieth stanza, which describes the lazy convent life of the Romish orders, is a masterpiece of quiet sarcasm;

and the lines which convey profoundly the influences of the Romish Church are so matchless that I must quote them:

"The throne, whose roots are in another world,
And whose far-reaching shadow awed our own."

The pictures of the landscapes of this western world, beautiful, grand, animated, many-watered and sail-thronged, the glimpses of Indian life, the appearance of the white race, the receding of forests and the rising of towns—all form a magnificent gallery of life and action and emotion. The young gentlemen of Harvard were wiser than they knew when they invited Bryant to write a poem for them; for their invitation resulted in the best college poem that ever was written.

The gravity of Bryant's genius, which is everywhere apparent in "The Ages," deepens in the poem which followed it (if my arrangement of the order in which they were composed is correct), and which is a very touching production. I refer to the "Hymn to Death," who is eulogized as the friend of man, in that he delivers him from the hands of the oppressor and the wrong-doer. The reverie of the poet, which, after all, was an idle one, was broken by the death of his father, and the strain ends sorrowfully:

"It must cease—

For he is in his grave who taught my youth
The art of verse, and in the bud of life
Offered me to the muses."

Dr. Bryant's skill as a physician is commemorated, as well as the sorrow with which his death was received by his friends and neighbors:

"This faltering verse, which thou
Shall not, as wont, o'erlook, as all I have
To offer at thy grave—this—and the hope
To copy thy example, and to leave
A name of which the wretched shall not think
As of an enemy's, whom they forgive
As all forgive the dead."

Bryant's tribute to the memory of his good father is to me very touching, and all the more so because it is expressed in guarded language. I find and feel a world of pathos in Bryant's poetry, concerning which Mr. Lowell showed his crotchets so singularly in his "Fables for Critics," which is only read—if it is read—by students of sarcastic criticism.

The key-notes of history and prophecy which were struck in "The Ages" reappear in "The Massacre at Scio," which has always seemed to me the most spirited lyric that sang itself into fiery life during the Greek revolution, and in saying this I have borne in mind the war songs of Campbell and Halleck's "Marco Bozzaris." The inspiration of "A Sunset Walk" glows through the tenderness and the picturesqueness of "The Indian Girl's Lament," which is simply exquisite. New elements of meditation underlie the compact "Ode for an Agricultural Celebration," and "Rizpah," which is far superior to any of the "Scripture Sketches" of Mr. N. P. Willis that were written about the same time, and were absurdly popular. The feeling of man's mortality which Bryant discovered to be the distinctive mark of his genius in "Thanatopsis" rose solemnly again in "The Old Man's Funeral," tempered with a philosophy and a hope which had hitherto been wanting in his poetry. The spirit of personal recollection which animated the fluent numbers of "Green River" sparkles with youthful light in "The Rivulet," which reflects the early life of the poet at Cummington. The waters of Helicon never bubbled more musically than the waters of this nameless little rill. The simplicity and the perfect melody of "The Yellow Violet" start into life again in "March," which is still the best poem ever written on that wild and stormy month, and is alike perfect in description and suggestion. The sickness of a beloved sister occasioned Bryant's first essay at sonnet-writing, an essay in which he was never successful, violating, as he did, then and later, most of the recognized laws of the sonnet. "Consumption" is a touching poem, with an exquisite thought in the twelfth line,

"Detach the delicate blossom from the tree."

It is instructive to read Bryant's poems in the order in which they were written, and to detect the different elements and emotions by which his genius was swayed, and the order in which they succeeded each other. The aboriginal influence, if I may call it such, slumbered for a time after "The Indian Girl's Lament," and awakened after the writing of the quatorzain on his sister's illness in "An Indian Story," which possesses no great

value, though it is melodious and picturesque. The impulse to write blank verse, which had died out in his "Hymn to Death," started into being again in "Summer Wind," one of his perfect poems of nature, sultry, smothered, and alive with the movements of the landscape. It was followed by the best of his aboriginal poems—"An Indian at the Burial Place of his Fathers." If it has a fault, I have yet to find it, for, *me judice*, it is as glorious as the Berkshire scenery which it celebrates. The dramatic situation and the character of the speaker are both seized and retained with distinctness and strength. The "Song" which followed it ("Dost thou idly ask to hear?") is pretty and picturesque, but no more; the genius of Bryant was averse from writing songs of imaginary amorousness. We detect in the next poem, "Hymn of the Waldenses," the first outcropping of the religious element in his poetry. It is manly and dignified, but in no sense remarkable; a lesser poet might easily have written it. Not so "Monument Mountain," which no other man in America was equal to. It is the most sustained and even of his early blank verse poems, grand in its sweep, picturesque in its groupings, dramatic, pathetic, primitive, a fitting monument for the poor Indian girl who perished among its precipices.

From the stern and stately blank verse of "Monument Mountain," the genius of Bryant turned in "After a Tempest," and painted an exquisite series of pictures of outdoor life in six perfect Spenserian stanzas. Every line, every word is a picture, or a suggestion of a picture, and the manifold details are everywhere subordinate to the general effect.

"The butterfly,
That seemed a living blossom of the air,"

is exceedingly beautiful. The measure of the lines "To a Water Fowl" unbends itself in "Autumn Woods," which are fairly radiant with color. The tint and tone of the ninth stanza are surprisingly rich and brilliant:

"But 'neath yon crimson tree,
Lover to listening maid might breathe his flame,
Nor mark, within its roseate canopy,
Her blush of maiden shame.

Bryant seldom violated the minor morals of

verse, for which I honor him; but he certainly violated one when he wrote "'neath," which is intolerable. "Mutation" and "November" call for no special comment; the last is a faithful reflection of the season described. "The Song of the Greek Amazon" fixes the date at which it was written, and indicates, if I am not mistaken, that it was written for an illustration, and probably for an annual. It is dramatic in intention, heroic, and very spirited. "To a Cloud" does not impress me much, for I cannot forget Shelley's "Cloud," which is gloriously imaginative in spite of its wanton carelessness. Bryant's measure is weak and ineffective. The story of "The Murdered Traveller" is told with the simplicity which characterizes all his minor poems, and with an indescribable grace and pathos.

Next in point of time came the "Hymn to the North Star," which Bryant has never excelled. I know not whether to admire it for its simplicity, its grandeur, its imagination and its intellectual largeness, or for the fusion and union of all these qualities. Campbell is a compact writer, but nothing in Campbell will for a moment compare with the greatness of this stanza:

"Alike beneath thine eye
The deeds of darkness and of light are done;
High toward the star-lit sky
Towns blaze, the smoke of battles blots the sun;
The night-storm on a thousand hills is loud,
And the strong wind of day doth mingle sea and cloud."

"The Lapse of Time" is very interesting to me in many ways. I see in it touches of meditative philosophy which I have not before discovered, exquisite melody of diction, a glimpse of Bryant's paternal tenderness in the mention of the little prattler at his knee, his belief in the greatness of his country, and a profound truth in the closing couplet:

"The memory of sorrow grows
A lighter burden of the heart."

I pass "The Song of the Stars" as not worthy of his genius, and come to the most impressive and reverential poem that he has yet written—a poem in which he passed from the pantheism of "Thanatopsis" into the pure religious spirit which looks up to the Creator from his works.

We had a succession of woods and pictures in "A Winter Piece," but the possibility of such forestry as we find in Bryant's next poem, "A Forest Hymn," had not dawned upon us as we read it. The gravity, the dignity, the solemnity of natural devotion, were never before stated so accurately and with such significance. We stand in thought in the heart of a great forest, under its broad roof of boughs, awed by the sacred influences of the place. A gloom which is not painful settles upon us; we are surrounded by mystery and unseen energy. The shadows are full of worshippers and beautiful things that live in their misty twilights. That delicate flower yonder, that looks so like a smile,

"Seems, as it issues from the shapeless mould,
An emanation of the indwelling Life,
A visible token of the upholding Love,
That are the soul of this great universe."

The great miracle of creation goes on around us; life and death, and life again. Life mocks at the hate of death, seats himself on his throne, and nourishes himself on his triumphs. Creator! when thou dost scare the world with tempests, set the heavens on fire with thunderbolts, or fill the whirlpool that uproots the woods and drowns cottages, spare us and ours, for we need not the wrath of the elements to teach us who rules them.

"Be it ours to meditate,
In these calm shades, thy milder majesty,
And to this beautiful order of thy works
Learn to conform the order of our lives."

If my study of Bryant's intellectual life is a correct one, the poems of which I have spoken were all written before his thirty-first year, and while he was scrawling strange words with the barbarous pen. That he was a husband and a father we have seen in "The Lapse of Time;" that he loved and admired his wife we see in his next poem ("Oh, Fairest of the Rural Maids"), which is lovely—lovely enough to win the approbation of Poe, who was chary of good words. I know of nothing more delicious than this stanza:

"Thy sports, thy wanderings, when a child,
Were ever in the sylvan wild;
And all the beauty of the place
Is in thy heart and on thy face."

I break the chronological connection of this imperfect study of Bryant's genius to say that this estimable lady inspired three of the tenderest poems that were ever written out of the heart of a loving husband. I refer to "The Future Life," which was written in his forty-third year (1837), "The Life that Is," which was written after her recovery from a dangerous illness at Naples in his sixty-fourth year, and the solemn requiem written shortly after her death and headed "October, 1866." These poems are full of deep but suppressed feeling, an emotion that fears to trust itself to words. The last is to me inexpressibly touching. "The North Pole" of Mr. Lowell has melted in his old age, if not before.

The forty poems of which I have spoken were all written, I believe, before Bryant came to New York and engaged actively in literary life. I detect from this time forward, I think, other and riper influences at work in his mind. What I mean is the sense of beauty and cheerfulness with which he meditated over themes in themselves sombre and melancholy. A good example of this philosophic sense is that perfect poem, "June." Another and better known example is the pensive dirge, "most musical, most melancholy," in which he has embalmed the memory of his sister, and which will always rank with the immortal dirges of the language, "The Death of the Flowers." There is no falling off of his imagination as he goes about his daily work in town, for the New York of that day practically ended at Canal street. A short walk brought Bryant into the country, or enough into the country to write such poems as "The Firmament," "The New Moon," "The Gladness of Nature," "A Summer Ramble," and "A Scene on the Banks of the Hudson." A stanza out of "A Summer Ramble" was no doubt the constant cry of his heart:

"Away! I will not be, to-day,
The only slave of toil and care,
Away from desk and dust! away!
I'll be as idle as the air."

And he is, for he straightway betakes himself to a long ramble along the banks of the Hudson, or across the heights of Weehawken, which his

friend Halleck had recently made famous in his humorous poem of "Fanny."

Contact with other men of letters and opportunities for literary employment broadened the genius of Bryant and occasionally, I fear, weakened it. I see it broadened in such poems as "A Song of Piteairn's Island," which is charmingly turned; in "Romero," which is animated with the patriotism of Spanish hearts; in "The Damsel of Peru," and in "The African Chief," which is one of his most vigorous productions. I see it weakened in the lines beginning "I cannot forget with what fervid devotion," and in the poems, "To a Mosquito," "A Meditation on Rhode Island Coal" and "Spring in Town." The humor of these elaborate trifles is very thin, and the imagination expended on them is utterly wasted. Bryant had a strong sense of humor, but it found no vent in his verse. His regard for the better side of the Indian character showed itself in "The Disinterred Warrior," a noble, statuesque poem; and his unquenchable love of freedom in "The Greek Partisan," which was composed, I imagine, for a picture. He gives us a broad view of his native hills and the surrounding country and his eldest daughter in his "Lines on Revisiting the Country," and a glimpse of an aged man and woman, long since dead, who once lived in the neighborhood of his father's house. "The Two Graves" is not one of his great poems, but it is very musical and tender. I find no large work of this period until I come to "The Past." There is a depth, a grandeur, a solemnity in this poem which Bryant had not before attained, and an imaginative presentation of things intangible which the strong art of the poet summons before us, we know not how. He contrives to repeople

"The dark backward and abysm of time"

with awful and sorrowful and beautiful shapes and shadows.

"They have not perished—no!
Kind words, remembered voices once so sweet,
Smiles, radiant long ago,
And features, the great soul's apparent seat.

* * * * *
And then shall I behold
Him, by whose kind paternal side I sprung,
And her, who, still and cold,
Fills the next grave—the beautiful and young."

We turn from the haunted darkness of "The Past" to "The Evening Wind," which is the first of a series of poems of which the humanities of earth are as positively the theme as its mortality was in "Thanatopsis." This great poet never ceases henceforth to remember that he is a man among men, and that all that concerns them concerns him. He sees the regions of land and sea that the wind has blown over on its journey to his lattice. He knows that it is a delight to others as well as to himself; to the higher forms of nature as well as to mankind; that it rocks the little bird in his nest, curls the still waters, summons the forest harmonies from innumerable boughs, and takes its pleasant way over the closing flowers. The old man leans his silver head to feel it; it kisses the sleeping child and dries the moistened curls on his temples; and those who watch by the sick man's bed part his curtains to allow it to cool his burning brow. This large, far-reaching sympathy with his fellow-creatures is a marked characteristic of Bryant's poetry, and distinguishes it, I think, from that of every other American poet, living or dead.

"The Evening Wind," is the first of a remarkable series of poems, of which "An Evening Revery," "Noon," "The Crowded Street," and "The Night Journey of a River," are noble examples. The heart of Bryant went out to the human race as the heart of Burns went out to the dumb creation in "The Two Dogs," and "The Farmer's Salutation to his Auld Mare," with infinite solicitation and pity. The still, sad music of humanity was ever sounding in his ears, moaning like the wind in the forest. To his eyes humanity was an endless procession moving along the earth, in sunshine and shadow, out of the darkness of birth into the night of death. They repose and they suffer, these fleeting, vanishing figures, but not for long. The end is certain and near. This philosophy of life is a serious one, but it admits of consolation and cheerfulness. It is dreary in Byron; it is awful in "Ecclesiastes," but it is neither in Bryant, at least, not to me, for I never rise from the perusal of the poems I have named, and others belonging to the same class, with a feeling of depression and gloom, thanks to the health and strength and serenity of his genius, which carries me away

out of myself, and elevates me above the sorrows and the sufferings of mankind.

There is a second series of poems equally distinctive of Bryant, and rather difficult of classification. They began with "A Forest Walk;" they inspired "The Ages;" they gathered darkly in the lines "To the Apennines" and "Earth;" and they were radiant and picturesque in "The Fountain" and "The Prairies." They may be said to concern themselves with the antiquity of nature and of the race.

A third and much larger series of poems may be roughly described as poems of nature, though they embrace sentiments of affection, philosophic reflection, meditation, morality, and other elements of thought and emotion. Such poems are "The Yellow Violet," "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," "Green River," "A Winter Piece," "The Rivulet," "March," "After a Tempest," "June," "The New Moon," and a score of others which will readily recur to the readers of Bryant. With "A Forest Hymn" commenced, as I have said, a series of poems in which a religious element predominated. It reappeared in the "Hymn to the North Star," "The Firmament," "Hymn of the City," "The Future Life," "The Life that Is," and perhaps as many more poems of a later date.

I have mentioned the lyrics with which Bryant fired the hearts of his readers during the Greek revolution, which cost Byron his life, and roused the martial energies of Campbell and Halleck. They were spirited, as I have remarked before, but not of so much value to us as the poems which commemorated the patriotism of our fathers, and awakened the patriotism of our sons. They began fairly in "The Song of Marion's Men," "Seventy-Six" and "The Green Mountain Boys;" they ended gloriously in "Not Yet," and "Our Country's Call."

Another class of poems come under the head of poems of imagination and fantasy. They began with the rural song, if I may call it such, which

the young poet addressed to the lady of his love; they culminated in "The Land of Dreams" and "The Burial of Love." I know of nothing more poetical than these exquisite dreams within dreams, which haunt the memory with visions of loveliness. The genius of Bryant was as beautiful as it was magnificent.

I have omitted to mention Bryant's translations, of which he executed, from first to last, over twenty, from the Greek, Latin, Spanish, German and Portuguese. I am not scholar enough to judge of them, but my sense of poetry leads me to prefer the translations from the Spanish to all the other tongues. The genius of Bryant sympathized profoundly, I am convinced, with the high, grave thoughts, and the lofty, sonorous measures of the Spanish poets. He was also (if the opinion of an unlettered man is worth anything) completely in sympathy with the primitive greatness of Homer. His translations of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" are the only ones that I have been able to read.

Bryant at his best was a great poet, and when not at his best was still a poet. He had a capacious intellect, which conceived largely and executed strongly, clearly, and with wonderful force of imagination. His eye was never awed by the immensity of the universe, and his heart, even in boyhood, was never subdued by the dread thought of death, which was always in his mind. He was the truest painter of American scenery, because he was the most accurate and most loving of all our painters, being at once minute and comprehensive. His diction was at all times in keeping with his theme, adapting itself readily to every turn of his thought. He knew the value of words, and neither stinted nor squandered them. Other American poets may have been more popular than he was, but none has had his reputation, and none has escaped his influence.

Such, I believe, are some of the characteristics of the poetry of my good friend Bryant.

THE JOURNALIST.

BY AN EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE.

MR. BRYANT was a citizen who recognized fully the duties of citizenship, but who had no ambition to fulfil those duties as a holder of public office. Had he, in earlier years, not turned his attention to journalism, it cannot be doubted that he would have found means for using his pen in behalf of the measures which his strong convictions so earnestly approved. Having assumed the editorial control of a leading daily newspaper, he found in that position the fullest opportunity to discuss all subjects which pertained to the national welfare, and for more than half a century the *EVENING POST* was an exponent of his views. Until the close of the civil war he was almost a daily contributor to its columns, and since that time he has exercised a general supervision of its course—his influence being none the less active because usually taking the form of criticism after the deed. In the highest sense of the term, therefore, Mr. Bryant was a politician. For every low phase of politics—the struggle for office, the methods of party managers, or the demagogic arguments of place hunters—he had the heartiest contempt.

The political history of an editor must be sought in the journal which reflects his views, and we therefore turn to the files of the *EVENING POST* to learn what men and measures Mr. Bryant supported or condemned. During the period embraced in his editorial career the most important questions which the republic has had to decide since its birth came up for discussion. He saw slavery contending for an extension of power and territory, succeeding for a time and then

overwhelmed in final disaster. He witnessed the struggles over the United States Bank, took part in the defence of the Sub-Treasury scheme, and, when the war imposed upon the country an irredeemable paper currency, he assisted in the still unfinished effort to secure a return to the system which the founders of the Republic so wisely believed to be the best for the nation. He early discovered the evils of a protective tariff system, and for no cause did he labor more zealously and constantly than for that of striking from our foreign trade the shackles which still embarrass it. During his editorial career he was called upon to criticise the administrations of Presidents Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln, Grant, and Hayes. This bare statement is sufficient to show the wide extent of the subjects which came under his notice. What opinions he expressed, what schemes he opposed, and what projects he supported the columns of the *EVENING POST* best disclose. More characteristic testimony to his views is given in some instances in speeches which he made and letters on political topics which appeared under his own signature; but his editorial pen was his most common means of communication with the public, and, as we have said, the student of his political history must turn to the pages of his own journal to find the views which, if not always set forth directly by himself, were printed subject to his approval.

As soon as Mr. Bryant accepted an editorial connection with the *EVENING POST* it began to at-

tack the protective system and to advocate the principles of free trade, and it was then the only newspaper north of the Potomac which took this ground. During all his life there was no political subject in which Mr. Bryant took so constant an interest as that of revenue reform, and the last article which he contributed to the pages of this journal was a discussion of the balance of trade. So prominent has been his position as a free-trade advocate that we need not dwell further upon his views on this subject.

On the slavery question Mr. Bryant was originally a Free Soil Democrat. In February, 1837, on the occasion of the rejection of a petition of colored men of this State asking the Legislature to put them on the same footing with the whites, the *EVENING POST* said:

"It appears to us that it is very unwise to connect this question with that of the principal object of the Abolitionists, which is, to do away with slavery in the Southern States. The great objection brought against their course hitherto has been that they were meddling with a matter with which they had no concern, and which their interference might make worse for both master and slave. There is not the least ground for either of these objections in the case of the petition in question. We recognize the blacks as citizens, and we have a perfect right to say how easy we will make the condition of their citizenship. The moment we allow ourselves to be restrained in legislating on this subject by a regard for what is or may be said at the South or anywhere else, we submit to external interference, we allow a power from without to dictate what shall be the qualifications of our voters. For our own part, we hesitate not to say that the prayer of the petition was just."

From February 6 to 11, 1837, the House of Representatives kept up an excited debate on the question of allowing Mr. Adams to present anti-slavery petitions. The *EVENING POST*, commenting on the debate, said:

"The whole affair is a striking example of the folly of attempting to muzzle discussion in this country. Checked in one direction, it will break out in another, the more violently on account of the attempt to repress it."

Later in the same year, when there was an angry discussion in the Senate on the subject of receiving a petition for emancipation in the District of Columbia, the *EVENING POST* said:

"Holding, as we do, that Congress has the constitutional power to dispose of the slavery

question in the District as it may deem fit, we regard with an indignant feeling any interference with the right of the citizens of the United States to make it the subject of memorials to the national legislature. To repulse such applications in silent scorn is neither the way to convince those who make them of their error, if they are in one, nor to make them desist from their course."

Strong as were Mr. Bryant's feelings in behalf of free trade, he did not allow those feelings to excite in him any sympathy with the Southern nullifiers who proposed to set the United States authorities at defiance, and the *EVENING POST* spoke out early and forcibly against the proposed nullification of United States laws by any State. Thus, on the 23d of March, 1832, it protested against the utterances of another journal which it referred to as "speaking lightly of the Union," and it said:

"The moment that our government ceases to be supported by the force of opinion in any considerable portion of its territory, that moment it is at an end. It is a dangerous experiment that some politicians are making to discover the utmost limit of this force of opinion, and at what point it will cease to support the execution of the laws in a large part of the Union. It is worse. It is a flagitious experiment—a danger unnecessarily and wantonly incurred."

When President Jackson's proclamation of December 10, 1832, to the South Carolina nullifiers appeared, the *EVENING POST* commended it, saying of it:

"The fallacies of the nullification doctrine are exposed in language of remarkable clearness and strength, and the consequence of carrying it into effect are depicted in a manner which must cause all those in South Carolina who are not wholly beside themselves with the excitement of the moment to shrink back with dread from the step which in the height of their infatuation they are about to take."

In the same connection the *EVENING POST* said:

"That question (South Carolina's attitude) must be managed with great judgment and with a strict desire to do justice and to preserve the Union, or its consequences may extend beyond the State of South Carolina. That the President and his Cabinet will so manage it we have not a doubt, and their course thus far is pledge that they will do so. But the administration cannot do everything; it must be sustained by Congress. The universal South is looking to Congress for a

removal of the burdens of which it has so long complained now that the plea of their being necessary for raising a revenue can no longer be urged in their excuse."

Mr. Bryant opposed the Whig projects of internal improvements and was an earnest supporter of President Jackson's course toward the United States Bank—disapproving of the bank and favoring the removal of the United States deposits. We find in the columns of the *EVENING POST* in 1833 complaints of the government's delay in ordering the deposits to be removed, and when the order for the removal was given it greatly rejoiced. Alluding to the despairing lamentations of the journals which sided with the bank, it said:

"Like the mis-shapen dwarf in the Lay of the Last Minstrel, they wave their lean arms on high and run to and fro crying 'Lost! lost! lost!' Who can doubt the sincerity of their lamentations at the death blow which has been given to the United States Bank, when it is remembered how munificent a patron that institution has been to them? Who can wonder that they appear at the head of the funeral train as chief mourners, and raise so loud their solemn wul-wullahs when he reflects how well their grief is paid for? But their wailing is vain—vainly they heap the ashes on their heads—the fate of the bank is sealed; and we who are not paid to wet our cheeks with artificial tears, who have no cause to be a mourner, must be permitted to congratulate the country that a monopoly which, in the corrupt exercise of its dangerous power, threatened to sap the foundation of American independence has, by this firm and timely act of the general government, been reduced to a state of feebleness which, we trust, is only the precursor of final dissolution."

The *EVENING POST* was a steady advocate of the Sub-Treasury scheme, and when in 1841 the act closing the Sub-Treasury in this city went into effect it said:

"Never was there a system of more complete and more expeditious responsibility. What would have required the negotiations and arrangements of months if a bank had been the depository is done in an instant. There is no inconvenience, no alarm, no loss. Wall street suffers no shock, Front street does not hear of the event. The merchants obtain their accommodations as usual. We doubt whether the wit of all our Legislatures, both state and national, has, within twenty years, devised anything so perfect in its way as the mode of keeping and

paying out the public money which Congress has just had the folly to abrogate."

On the 4th of September, 1837, President Van Buren sent in his message to Congress on its meeting in extra session. The message treated largely of the safe-keeping and disbursement of the public money, and of it the *EVENING POST* said:

"We welcome it not only with the satisfaction which the members of a political party feel when those whom they have placed high in public trust redeem worthily and fully the pledges they have given, but with a peculiar gratification of seeing the measure of separating politics from banking, for which we have long contended, earnestly recommended to the American people."

In August, 1841, Mr. Tyler vetoed the Bank bill which the Whig Congress had passed. The *EVENING POST* predicted that he could not sanction this measure consistently, and, commenting on the result, it said:

"It becomes the Democratic party to rejoice at this event for more reasons than one. It puts an end to our apprehensions about a national bank. It is a matter of rejoicing that treachery has met with its due reward. Such is the punishment which has overtaken the conspirators who sought to establish a bank without consulting the will of the people. It is a subject of congratulation that the least scrupulous and most sordid of all parties which ever existed in this country is broken up, prostrated and scattered by this blow from the hand of one who assisted to place it in the ascendancy."

Of course a man holding Mr. Bryant's views was brought constantly in conflict with the opinion of Henry Clay. They were as opposed to one another politically as two political students could be, and we can recall but one question about which they agreed, namely, in opposing the war with Mexico. But when the Whig National Convention at Harrisburg, Pa., in December, 1839, nominated General Harrison for the Presidency instead of Henry Clay, the *EVENING POST* made the following generous allusion to the defeated candidate:

"The refusal to nominate Mr. Clay affords a fair presumption that the Whig party is unwilling to leave the next Presidential election to be decided by the popularity of their own principles. Mr. Clay is completely identified with the Whig party, not only in all its doctrines, but in all its practices and measures. He is one of the fairest

and at the same time one of the most favorable impersonations of that party which can be found. If he were to be a candidate he would stand before the public responsible for the proceedings of his party through a long course of years—proceedings *quorum pars magna fuit*. His party have preferred a man who has taken a very insignificant part in civil life, a man of pliant and easy disposition, who was never remarkable for decided opinions, and, in fact, whose opinions nobody ever thought it worth while to inquire about before he was nominated.”

As a Free Soil Democrat Mr. Bryant was a zealous opponent of the Texas annexation project, and he denounced it in the *EVENING POST* as “infamous.” He was one of the vice-presidents of an anti-annexation meeting held in the Tabernacle in this city on the 24th of April, 1844, at which Albert Gallatin presided, and resolutions were adopted declaring that the United States had by treaty acknowledged Texas to be a part of Mexico; that annexation would be a declaration of war against that nation, and that “Texas should in no case be annexed without proper guards against slavery.” He favored the nomination of Van Buren for the Presidency in 1844, and was not satisfied with Polk. The *EVENING POST*, however, supported the latter, arguing that “if the dissatisfied part of the party should withdraw their support from Mr. Polk the effect would be either to defeat the party altogether or to permit the advocates of unconditional annexation to claim the victory as exclusively their own.” But, if the Van Buren Democrats continued their allegiance to the party, it thought that “the Texas question then becomes a question which the Democrats are to settle among themselves, on principles of equity and justice, in the determination of which the whole party will be consulted.”

Texan annexation was accomplished, and the predicted war with Mexico followed. We find the *EVENING POST* saying on the 8th of May, 1846, a short time before General Taylor crossed the Rio Grande:

“We were assured when Texas was annexed to the Union that it would draw after it no such consequences as now seem imminent if our relations with Mexico be not managed with great delicacy and prudence. We have a right to expect of our government that it shall leave no honorable method unemployd to prevent that act

from bringing upon us hostilities serious to our commerce, and expenditures burdensome to the people.”

When the war actually began the *EVENING POST* said:

“Whatever may be the varieties of opinion in regard to the question whether this war could have been avoided, the large majority of both political parties, in this part of the country at least, are disposed to give support to the administration in its prosecution. The fact is, we believe, the people are weary of the amphibious state in which our relations toward Mexico have so long remained. We approve of making such demonstrations of vigor as shall convince Mexico that we are in earnest, and that we are resolved upon an adjustment of the difficulties which have so long subsisted between us.”

Mr. Bryant supported Pierce for President in 1852, although recognising some of the inconsistencies of the platform on which he was nominated. He was, however, disappointed in his administration, and believing that it was irretrievably allied to the slave power he became one of its opponents. On the 29th of April, 1856, a great meeting was held in the Tabernacle in this city “to oppose the measures and policy of the present national administration for the extension of slavery over territory embraced within the compact of the ‘Missouri Compromise,’ and in favor of repairing the mischiefs arising from the violation of good faith in its repeal, and of restoring the action and position of the federal government on the subject of slavery to the principles of Washington and Jefferson.” At this meeting the following letter from Mr. Bryant was read:

“NEW YORK, April 28, 1856.

“Gentlemen: It may not be in my power to be present at the meeting at which you have done me the honor to request my attendance, but I fully agree with you as to the importance of a combined effort to assert the right of the great body of American citizens against the encroachments of an oligarchy—a class of proprietors who seek to subject all other interests, even the most sacred and dear, to their own.

“Even if the question were merely whether we should stand by our old neighbors—our friends and kinsmen, who have lately left us for a new home west of Missouri, the occasion would be a fitting one to call forth all our zeal and unite all our strength. If we desert them in their hour of need we shall be justly branded as cold-hearted, selfish and cowardly. No nation in the history

of the world was ever so faithless to the obligations of humanity as to be indifferent to the fate of the colonies it had planted. With the republics of antiquity it was a matter of course to answer the call of their colonies with instant sympathy and aid. England would cover herself with infamy if she were to allow one of her colonies, appealing to her for protection, to be brought by force under the sway of an absolute government. In the present case the call made upon us is for a species of succor which will cost us no sacrifice, the cheap and peaceful aid of our votes. The votes of the great, prosperous and powerful North are all that is required to deliver the settlements on the Kansas from the combination of fraud and violence formed to wrest from them their rights and compel them to submit to laws which their representatives never enacted. We raise committees, we organize a system of charity when our benevolence is appealed to by the people of a foreign country in distress. Ought we to do less for our countrymen? Let us organize the entire region of the free States, with such aid as we can obtain from the just and well disposed of the slave States, into a great association for breaking up the conspiracy against the rights of our countrymen and kindred at the West who look to us for help. Every generous feeling allies itself with the sense of justice in favor of the cause in which you are engaged. I am, gentlemen, with great regard, your obedient servant,

"WILLIAM C. BRYANT."

From this time Mr. Bryant acted with the Republican party. He sustained Fremont in the *EVENING POST* in 1856, was a Republican Presidential elector in 1860, gave Lincoln and the Union cause his warmest support in 1861 and during the war, and advocated the election of Grant in 1868. He was, however, no servile follower of any party standard, and he was ever ready to criticise the men and measures of the Republican party when they were opposed to his judgment as he was ready to commend the men and measures of its opponents when they met his approval.

The administration of General Grant was unsatisfactory to him in many ways, and he with thousands of others looked to the Cincinnati convention of 1872 to offer to the country a candidate and a platform which would give the fullest promise of an administration pledged to support an enlightened revenue system and a reformed civil service. The nomination of Horace Greeley, the leading protectionist of the country, was a

great disappointment to him, and he did not hesitate in refusing to accept Mr. Greeley as the representative of the ideas which the promoters of the Cincinnati convention favored. On the 30th of May, 1872, a meeting was held in Steinway Hall in this city to discuss the possibility of putting in the field a ticket which would represent those ideas. At this meeting Mr. Bryant presided, and in his speech on that occasion he said:

"We will go on and demand of Congress that it shall give the people all which they are entitled to; that is to say, an honest revenue tariff and nothing else. That we are determined to have, and we will not give over this effort; we will not cease agitating this subject until we shall have made it dangerous for any political party, whatever its name, to ignore this important question and to put aside the demand of the people for an abrogation of this duty, these indirect taxes, which are burdensome to every walk of life, every class, and which paralyze the industry of the country."

The nomination of such a candidate as this meeting desired was not secured, and the *EVENING POST* gave its support to the re-election of President Grant as the best thing attainable in the circumstances.

During the summer of 1872, there were rumors that Mr. Bryant himself would be the Presidential candidate of the dissatisfied members of the Cincinnati Convention. To silence this report he printed the following card:

"Certain journals of this city have lately spoken of me as one ambitious of being nominated as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. The idea is absurd enough, not only on account of my advanced age, but of my unfitness in various respects for the labor of so eminent a post. I do not, however, object to the discussion of my deficiencies on any other ground than that it is altogether superfluous, since it is impossible that I should receive any formal nomination, and equally impossible, if it were offered, that I should commit the folly of accepting it."

"WILLIAM C. BRYANT."

"New York, July 8, 1872."

Mr. Bryant's last appearance at a political meeting was in 1875, when on the 12th of January he presided at the meeting held in Cooper Institute to denounce the interference of United States troops with the Louisiana Legislature. In his speech on this occasion he said:

"I regard this question solely as a solemn question of constitutional law. No matter who desires the interference of the military, it should not have been given but in the way of the Constitution—otherwise it is an act from which no citizen has a right to withhold his condemnation. It must be rebuked the instant it is perpetrated. The evil must be crushed in its infancy, while its bones are yet in gristle, and before it becomes formidable as a precedent. These practices, which contemplate the subjection of local politics to the federal authorities by the exercise of the military power, must be stopped, must be broken up forever."

Mr. Bryant's active interest in all the political questions of the day continued up to the time of his last illness, and although he was not called on, after the meeting mentioned above, to speak on political subjects, he continued from time to time to use his pen with all its old vigor. An editorial article by him, printed in the *EVENING POST* of the 26th November, 1876, on the occasion of the intervention of the United States troops in the Legislature of South Carolina illustrated his vigor of thought and expression, and was widely copied. In this article he said :

"We protest against the proceeding, not only in the name of liberty and justice, but in behalf of the Republican party, whose good name and worthy record are brought in question by the

resort to military force in a question purely political. Here is already incorporated into the history of a republic a precedent of as arbitrary a nature as the act of Cromwell when he turned the British Parliament out of doors. The rule of all representative bodies, that they are judges of the election and qualifications of their members, is summarily set aside, and Mr. Dennis the furniture dealer, with federal troops at his back, usurps that office. Even the excuse that disturbance and bloodshed were dreaded, and insurrection so formidable that Governor Chamberlain would lack the means to quell it, does not appear to have been made. The usurpation is not masked with any plausible pretext; it sweeps away every restraint of usage and precedent and law, and substitutes simple force for the quiet formalities of ordinary legislation. The Republican party is not powerful enough in comparison with the opposition to sustain the responsibility of such measures, and it becomes every member of it who desires its predominance and its usefulness, to disclaim all part in such proceedings."

A subject in which he took great personal interest in late years was reciprocity treaties with other countries, and particularly with Hawaii; and almost the only piece of consecutive editorial work which he did on the *EVENING POST*, since the war, was the series of articles in support of the Hawaiian treaty, all of which were from his pen.

THE LAST ORATION.

Mr. Bryant appeared for the last time in public on the 29th of May, 1878. He then took part in the ceremony of unveiling the bust of Mazzini, the Italian statesman, in the Central Park, in New York, and delivered the following address:

"History, my friends, has recorded the deeds of Giuseppe Mazzini on a tablet which will endure while the annals of Italy are read. Art has been called to do her part in perpetuating his memory, and to-day a bust is unveiled which will make millions familiar with the divine image stamped on the countenance of one of the greatest men of our times.

"The idea of Italian unity and liberty was the passion of Mazzini's life; it took possession of him in youth, it grew stronger as the years went on, and lost none of its power over him in his age. Nor is it at all surprising that it should have taken a strong hold on his youthful imagination. I recollect very well that when, forty-four years ago, I first entered Italy, then held down under the weight of a score of despotisms, the same idea forcibly suggested itself to my mind as I looked southward from the slopes of the mountain country. There lay a great sisterhood of provinces requiring only a confederate republican government to raise them to the rank of a great power, presenting to the world a single majestic front, and parcelling out the powers of local legislation and government among the different neighborhoods in such a manner as to educate the whole population in a knowledge of the duties and rights of freemen. There were the industrious Piedmontese, the enterprising Genoese, among whom Mazzini was born—a countryman of Columbus—there were the ambitious Venetians and

the Lombards, rejoicing in their fertile plains; and, there, as the imagination followed the ridge of the Appenines toward the Strait of Messina, were the Tuscans, famed in letters, the Umbrians, wearing in their aspect the tokens of Latin descent, the Romans in their centre of arts, the gay Neapolitans, and further south the versatile Sicilians, over whose valleys rolls the smoke of the most famous volcano in the world. As we traverse these regions in thought we recognize them all as parts of one Italy, yet each inhabited by Italians of a different character from the rest, all speaking Italian, but with a difference in each province; each region cherishing its peculiar traditions, which reach back to the beginning of civilization, and its peculiar usages observed for ages.

"Well might the great man whose bust we disclose at this time to the public gaze be deeply moved by this spectacle of his countrymen and kindred bound in the shackles of a brood of local tyrannies which kept them apart that they might with more ease be oppressed. When he further considered the many great men who had risen from time to time in Italy as examples of the intellectual endowments of her people—statesmen, legislators, men of letters, men eminent in philosophy, in arms, and in arts—I say that he might well claim for the birth-place of such men the unity of its provinces to make it great, and the liberty of its people to raise them up to the standard of their mental endowments. Who shall blame him—who in this land of freedom—for demanding in behalf of such a country a political constitution framed on the most liberal pattern which the world has seen?

"For such a constitution he planned; for that he labored; that object he never suffered to be

out of his sight. No proclaimer of a new religion was ever more faithful to his mission. Here where we have lately closed a sanguinary but successful war in defence of the unity of the states which form our republic; here where we have just broken the chains of three millions of bondmen, is, above all others, the place where a memorial of the great champion of Italian unity and liberty should be set up amid a storm of acclamation from a multitude of freemen.

"Yet earnestly as he desired these ends and struggled to attain them, the struggle was a noble and manly one; he disdained to compass these ends by base or ferocious means; he abhorred bloodshed; he detested vengeance; he spoke little of rights, but much of duties, resolving the cares of an enlightened statesmanship into matters of duty. The only warfare which he would allow, and that as a sorrowful necessity, was an open warfare waged against that brute force that violates human duty and human right. In that warfare his courage rose always equal to the occasion—a courage worthy of the generous political philosophy which he professed. For there was no trial he would not endure, no sacrifice, no labor he would not undertake, no danger he would not encounter for the sake of that dream of his youth and pursuit of his manhood, the unity and liberty of Italy.

"That country is now united under one political head—save a portion arbitrarily and unjustly added to France—and to the public opinion formed in Italy by the teachings of Mazzini the union is in large measure due. Italy has now a constitutional government, the best feature of which it owes to the principles of republicanism in which Mazzini trained a whole generation of the young men of Italy, however short the present government of the country may fall of the ideal standard at which he aimed.

"One great result for which he labored was the perfect freedom of religious worship. Well has he deserved the honors of posterity who, holding enforced worship to be an abomination in the sight of God, took his life in his hand and went boldly forward until the yoke of the great tyranny exercised over the religious conscience in his native country was broken. Such a hero deserves a monument in a land where the government knows no distinction between religious denominations and leaves their worship to their consciences.

"I will not say that he whose image is to-day unveiled was prudent in all his proceedings; nobody is; timidity itself is not always prudence. But wherever he went and whatever he did he was a power on earth. He wielded an immense influence over men's minds; he controlled a vast agency, he made himself the centre of a wide diffusion of opinions; his footsteps are seen in the track of history by those who do not always reflect by whose feet they are impressed. Such was the celerity of his movements and so sure the attachment of his followers that he was the terror of the crowned heads of Europe. Kings trembled when they heard that he had suddenly disappeared from London, and breathed more freely when they learned that he was in his grave. In proportion as he was dreaded he was maligned.

"Image of the illustrious champion of civil and religious liberty, cast in enduring bronze to typify the imperishable renown of thy original! Remain for ages yet to come where we place thee, in this resort of millions; remain till the day shall dawn—far distant though it may be—when the rights and duties of human brotherhood shall be acknowledged by all the races of mankind."

ILLNESS, DEATH AND BURIAL.

Mr. Bryant partook of a very light luncheon on the day of the Mazzini celebration, and was driven to the Central Park soon afterward in his carriage. The day was warm, and the sun was shining so brightly when he advanced to make his address that a friend insisted upon holding an umbrella over him; as he began his peroration, however, he stepped forth and stood with his uncovered head exposed to the full glare of the sunlight, and when he ceased speaking he was evidently much exhausted. Disclaiming all fatigue, he accepted an invitation to visit the house of General James G. Wilson in Seventy-fourth street to rest and partake of a little refreshment. This was at about half-past three o'clock in the afternoon. With one hand on the arm of his host, and the other holding the hand of General Wilson's little daughter, he crossed the green to the Halleck statue, in front of which he paused to make a few comments. The Morse statue and the Lenox Library building also attracted his attention in their order, and called forth some further remark. Between the Mazzini bust and the Seventy-second street gate a number of birds were observed flying about or hopping across the green. Mr. Bryant asked the child by his side whether she knew what the birds were, and, on receiving correct answers, seemed much pleased. He then asked her if she had ever heard some little verses about the Bob-o'-Link. She replied that she had, and she also knew the poet who wrote them. This caused him much amusement, and he said: "I think I shall have to write them out for you some time."

Going up the steps of the house, Mr. Bryant still held General Wilson's arm. The outer door, which is a double one, stood half open. Stepping into the vestibule with his daughter to open the

inner door with his latch-key, General Wilson left his guest leaning against the outer door-post. Scarcely a second had elapsed before a sound attracted his attention, and, turning, he caught sight of Mr. Bryant just as his head struck the platform step. The old gentleman had fallen directly backward, and the lower part of his body lay inside the vestibule. Had he stepped back at all in his fall, he would without doubt have gone to the bottom of the steps; had he veered to either side, he must have struck the edge of the closed door or the stone jam. In either case he would probably have been killed at once, or received a wound which he could survive at most but a few hours. A gentleman who was passing in the street saw the accident and hastened to offer his services; at the same time the servants of the house appeared, and Mr. Bryant was carried into the parlor and laid on a sofa in a state of insensibility. Mrs. Wilson had some ice water brought, with which she bathed his head. The sufferer murmured "Don't!" but exhibited no signs of consciousness. He at last recovered enough to sit up, and a glass of iced sherry was offered him, which he drank. This seemed to revive him a good deal, and he put his hand to his head, moaning, "My head! my head! I don't feel well." General Wilson suggested his going up stairs to bed, and asked where his medical adviser could be found, but all offers of assistance were declined. The one thought that seemed to possess Mr. Bryant's mind was that of getting home; accordingly, it was proposed to call a carriage, but he expressed a preference for the horse cars.

He was taken down town by General Wilson in a Madison avenue car as far as Seventeenth street, where a passing cab was hailed, and he

was driven directly to his house, No. 24 West Sixteenth street. During all this time he would use connected sentences in conversation, but lapses would occur in his train of thought, and his attention would wander for a minute or two.

Arrived at his home, he looked curiously at the house and up and down the street. "Whose house is this?" "What street is this?" he would inquire, apparently unwilling to enter a place so unfamiliar to him without an explanation. General Wilson did not answer these questions directly, but evaded them by suggesting that they should go in together and rest a few moments, and, having helped Mr. Bryant up the steps, rang the bell. The servant did not come at once; and with a movement which had evidently become mechanical through long habit, the old gentleman put his hand into his pocket, drew thence a latch-key, and opened the door himself. The two passed through the parlor into the dining-room, where the maid-servant who had started to answer the bell advanced toward them. Mr. Bryant looked dreamily at her a moment, then turned to General Wilson, and inquired: "Would you like to see Miss Fairchild?" Receiving an affirmative answer, he directed the servant to call his niece.

When Miss Fairchild entered the parlor, General Wilson was there to meet her, and in a few words explained what had occurred. She hastened to the dining-room and spoke to Mr. Bryant, who was seated in a large easy chair. He recognized her at once, and she proposed sending for Dr. Gray, his physician. He expressed a doubt whether the doctor, who goes out but very little, would come if sent for, but finally consented. After his removal up-stairs to his library he was left for a moment in the care of a servant a fact which he appreciated well enough to give some orders to her. He then fell into a semi-conscious state. Dr. Gray, on his arrival, called Dr. Carnochan, the surgeon, into consultation; a careful examination, however, having discovered no cut or contusion on the patient's head, and the disorder having been decided to be concussion of the brain, Dr. Paine was called in, upon whom, jointly with Dr. Gray, thereafter devolved the entire conduct of the case. From Dr. Paine, on the day of Mr. Bryant's death—

two weeks afterward—the following statement was obtained:

"A few hours after the accident, and while Mr. Bryant was in his own house, he became unconscious. From this comatose state he rallied occasionally, at times reviving sufficiently to engage in some very slight conversation, although it is uncertain how far he was able to recognize his friends. He made no remarks upon any subject except a few in reference to his preferences in the matters of diet and air. Once in a while he would ask for more air. Until Sunday he was able to leave his bed, and some hope was entertained that he might recover his physical health; but on that day, without any apparent cause, a paralysis of his right side intervened, and he began rapidly to fail. His coma became more decided; he spoke with difficulty, but gave no signs of recognition or intelligence; he grew weaker and weaker. His vitality continued to diminish until 5.35 o'clock this morning, when, without struggle or disturbance of any sort, and surrounded by his family, he died while asleep."

The funeral of Mr. Bryant took place on Friday morning, June 14th, in the Rev. Dr. Bellows's church, at the corner of Fourth avenue and Twentieth street. There were no services at the house.

The coffin, which was covered with black cloth and mounted with silver, bore a plate with the inscription, "William Cullen Bryant. Born November 3, 1794. Died June 12, 1878." Resting on the coffin was a spray of palm leaves, fastened together by a knot of white ribbon; two large baskets of flowers were upon the communion table, and on the baptismal font was a beautiful floral pillar.

After the doors were opened, at ten o'clock, the throng in waiting moved slowly into the church, which was filled to its utmost capacity, the galleries being as crowded as the main floor. When all the pews were occupied the aisles were filled with persons standing, except the upper part of the centre aisle, which was kept clear. Many who came to the church were obliged to turn away, finding that they could not gain admission,

Large delegations were present from the Century Club, the Union League Club, the New York Historical Society, the Public Schools Aid Society, the New York Press Club, the Associated Press, and other organizations.

Four different Italian Societies were represented, the Mazzini Monument Committee, the Italian Mutual Benevolent Society, the Italian Brotherly Society and the Circolo Italiano, which sent a committee to the church, of which C. F. Secchi de Casali, editor of *L'Eco d'Italia*, was chairman.

Among the well-known persons present were Messrs. John Bigelow, Jackson S. Schultz, Joseph H. Choate, John Jay, E. C. Cowdin, Cornelius R. Agnew, Peter Cooper, Luther R. Marsh, David Dows, Joseph Seligman, Charles Lanier, Josiah M. Fiske, A. P. Man, Charles W. Griswold, F. D. Tappen, Lucius Tuckerman, J. Langdon Ward, W. H. Lee, F. A. Stout, M. M. Beckwith, C. A. Peabody, Thomas Hillhouse, J. B. Kiddoo, O. P. C. Billings, W. H. Fogg, Charles E. Beebe, James Otis, John H. Hall, Daniel Lord, Jr., George C. Magoun, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Osgood, Chief Justice Daly, Judge Peabody, Judge Howland, the Rev. Dr. Howard Crosby, John H. Gourlie, John A. Graham, Henry D. Sedgwick, Judge William E. Curtis, Professor Youmans, Judge Speir, David Dudley Field, Salem H. Wales, Smith E. Lane, Allan Evarts, Stephen P. Nash, C. C. Beaman, Edmund C. Stedman, Walt Whitman, Eastman Johnson, John Burroughs, Daniel Huntington, Professor Botta, S. R. Gifford, R. W. Hubbard, Professor Drisler, Professor Van Amringe, Professor Stengel, Fire Commissioners King and Gorman, James W. Pinchot, the Rev. Dr. Booth, Charles O'Connor, Henry Sedley, Henry A. Oakley, Governor Tilden with Mrs. Pelton, Colonel Pelton, Mrs. Cornelius W. Lawrence, Charles Butler, Richard Henry Stoddard, Dr. T. M. Coan, Rowland Johnson, Lewis G. Morris, of Fordham, Ex-Governor Morgan, Edward Cooper, R. H. McCurdy, D. D. T. Marshall, Dr. L. Hallock, Colonel T. B. Thorpe, Sidney Howard Gay, Charlton T. Lewis, John Savage, Erastus Brooks, Cyrus W. Field, Ellwood E. Thorne, Wilson G. Hunt, R. W. Gilder, Whitelaw Reid, the Rev. Dr. Prime, the Rev. Dr. Henry M. Field, the Rev. Dr. Potter, the Rev. Dr. Adams, Thurlow

Weed, Cephas G. Thompson, Molyneux Bell, Addison Brown, W. F. Williams, Dr. Alexander Wilder, William Ross Wallace, J. M. McLean, the Rev. Dr. Dowley, the Rev. Dr. Storrs, the Rev. Dr. Ormiston, the Rev. Dr. Rogers, Bishop Potter, Richard H. Dana, Jr., Professor Lovering of Harvard College, Drs. Gray and Paine, Henry Bergh, George W. Rose, and many others.

Among the members of Mr. Bryant's family present were Messrs. John H. Bryant and Arthur Bryant, his brothers; Bryant Godwin, Harold Godwin, Miss Minna Godwin, Miss Nora Godwin and Miss Fanny Godwin, his grandchildren; Miss Fairchild, his niece; and Miss Bryant, his daughter. Mrs. Parke Godwin, Mr. Bryant's elder daughter, who is travelling with her husband in Europe, received the sad intelligence too late to admit of her returning to attend the funeral.

Of the persons who have been associated with Mr. Bryant in connection with the *EVENING POST* there were present, among others, Mr. Isaac Henderson, Mr. Isaac Henderson, Jr., Mr. William G. Boggs, Mr. N. F. Whiting, Mr. Albert B. King and Mr. Watson R. Sperry.

The services began with a prelude on the organ, the selection being the andante from Beethoven's seventh symphony. This was followed by the singing of Rooke's "Rest, spirit, rest," the singers being a quartette composed of Miss Barton, soprano; Miss Bell, alto; Mr. Jamieson, tenor, and Mr. Clapp, bass. Mr. Melvin Brown was the organist.

The Rev. Dr. Bellows read the King's chapel service for the dead, and then offered prayer. After the hymn "Come unto Him," by Handel, he delivered the address which is printed elsewhere in full.

At the close of the address the choir sang to the tune of Beethoven's "Germany" the following hymn, of which Mr. Bryant was the author:

"Deem not that they are blest alone
Whose days a peaceful tenor keep;
The God who loves our race has chosen
A blessing for the eyes that weep.

"The light of smiles shall fill again
The lids that overflow with tears,
And weary hours of woe and pain
Are earnest of serenest years.

"Oh, there are days of hope and rest
For every dark and troubled night!
And grief may bide an evening guest;
But joy shall come with early light.

"And thou who o'er thy friend's low bier
Dost shed the bitter drops like rain,
Hope that a brighter, happier sphere
Will give him to thy arms again."

The Lord's Prayer having been recited in unison by the pastor and the congregation, Dr. Bellows announced that the body would be conveyed to Roslyn, Long Island, for burial. He then pronounced the benediction.

Beethoven's funeral march was played on the organ and the vast congregation dispersed, passing slowly by the coffin, which remained unopened.

The special train which conveyed the body of Mr. Bryant to Roslyn, Long Island, in the afternoon, left Hunter's Point at half-past 1 o'clock. The accompanying party occupied two passenger cars. Of Mr. Bryant's family there were present, Miss Bryant, Arthur Bryant, John H. Bryant, Bryant Godwin, Harold Godwin, Miss Minna Godwin, Miss Nora Godwin, Miss Fanny Godwin, Captain Cullen Bryant and Miss Fairchild. Among the accompanying friends were Chief-Justice Daly, Ex-Governor Tilden, Cyrus W. Field, Judge Howland, the Rev. Dr. Osgood, Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. John J. Monell, Miss Sands, Charles Butler, Charles F. McLean, J. H. Platt, John A. Graham, John Bigelow, Mrs. Bigelow, S. L. M. Barlow and Mrs. Barlow, James Williams, the Rev. Horatio N. Powers, Isaac Henderson, Isaac Henderson, Jr., F. K. Goddard, General Wilson, Watson R. Sperry and Henry Dithmar, who for nearly a quarter of a century has been foreman of the *EVENING POST* composing room.

When the train arrived at Roslyn the coffin was placed in a hearse and borne to the cemetery, followed by the mourners. A grave had been dug in the Bryant burial plot, close to the granite monument which marks the resting-place of Mr. Bryant's wife. While the attendants were placing the coffin beside the open grave the friends gathered near its head, under the shadow of the granite monument and a cluster of young trees. For a few moments there was a pause.

Presently Dr. Bellows, standing at the head of the grave, spoke.

"My dear friends," he said, "let us draw lessons from Mr. Bryant's life; let us uncover our hearts, not our heads, to the sunshine. We have left the city behind us now, where we have done all that was possible to do to show our reverence and respect; but here let us pause and think that his dust might rejoice to find itself in the country, amid trees, birds, and flowers. While we breathe the pure air, may we not have a foretaste of the happiness he enjoys in the immortal fields? But I will not speak to you out of my own mouth. I have something better—Bryant's own words—his own preparations for this hour, nay, this very moment. Seldom has it happened to any man to rehearse beforehand the thoughts and words appropriate to be uttered at his own grave. I shall read to you these extracts prepared by the loving hands of one who shared Bryant's cradle—his brother."

The extracts were from "*Thanatopsis*," beginning with the verse—

"So live that when thy summons comes to join—"

and from the poems entitled, "*To a Water-fowl*," "*A Hymn to Death*," "*The Battlefield*," "*Waiting by the Gate*," stanzas prefaced to "*Thanatopsis*" when first published, "*The Journey of Life*," a poem addressed to Mrs. Bryant in her last illness, "*The Life that Is*," "October, 1866," "November 3, 1861," and "*The Two Travellers*."

The close of the address was a charge to the villagers present to "cherish the precious heritage of dust," and the assurance that in the future the best fame of Roslyn would be that it is Bryant's resting place. The Scriptural quotations of the Episcopal burial services were read; a brief prayer was made, and the coffin was lowered into its place. Then a number of little children, belonging to the Sunday-school of the village, stepped forward, and, walking around the grave, threw flowers into it until the box enclosing the coffin was covered. Several branches of the century plant, sent by the Century Club, were laid with the flowers. This closed the burial services, and the mourners slowly left the cemetery.

FUNERAL ADDRESS.

DELIVERED BY THE REV. HENRY W. BELLOWS, D.D., AT ALL SOULS' CHURCH, IN NEW YORK CITY, ON THE 14TH OF JUNE, 1878.

The whole country is bending with us, their favored representatives, over the bier that holds the dust of Bryant! Private as the simple service is that consigns the ashes of our illustrious poet and journalist to the grave, there is public mourning in all hearts and homes, making these funeral rites solemn and universal by the sympathy that from every quarter flows toward them, and swells the current of grateful and reverent emotion. Much as the modest, unworldly spirit of the man we mourn shrunk from the parade of public rites, leaving to his heirs the duty of a rigid simplicity in his funeral, neither his wishes nor theirs could render his death and burial less than an event of general significance and national concern. It is not for his glory that we honor and commemorate him. Public fame, for more than half a century, has made it needless, or impossible, to add one laurel to his crown. So long ago he took the place he has since kept in public admiration, respect, and reverence, that no living tongue could now dislodge or add to the security and mild splendor of his reputation. For three generations he has been a fixed star in our firmament, and no eulogy could be so complete as that which by accumulation of meaning dwells in the simple mention of his name.

Few lives have been as fortunate and complete as his. Born in 1794, when this young nation was in its teens, he has been contemporary with nearly the whole first century of its life. If no country ever experienced in the same period such a miracle of growth, if none ever profited so

much by discoveries and inventions—never before so wonderful as those made in the half century which gave us steam-navigation, the railroad, and the telegraph—he saw the birth, he antedates the existence of every one of the characteristic triumphs of modern civilization, and yet he has not died until they became wholly familiar and nearly universal in their fruitful influence! Born and bred in New England, and on the summits of the Green Mountains, he inherited the severe and simple tastes and habits of that rugged region, and having sprung from a vigorous and intellectual parentage, and in contact with a few persons with whom nature and books took the place of social pleasures and the excitements of town and cities, his native genius made him, from a tender age, the thoughtful and intimate companion of woods and streams, and constituted him nature's own darling child. It was a friendship so unfeigned, so deep, so much in accordance with his temperament and mental constitution, that it grew into a determining passion, and shaped his whole life, while in the poetry to which it gave birth it laid the foundations and erected the structure of his poetic fame. What Wordsworth did for English poetry, in bringing back the taste for nature, as the counterpart of humanity—a world to be interpreted not by the outward eyes, but by the soul—Bryant did for America. One who knew them both, as I did, could not fail to observe the strong resemblance in character and feeling, with the marked difference between them on which I will not dwell.

Both were reserved, unsmiling, austere, or irresponsible men, in aspect; not at home in cities or in crowds, not easy of access, or dependent on companionship—never fully themselves except when alone with nature. They coveted solitude, for it gave them uninterrupted intercourse with that beautiful, companionable, tender, unintrusive world, which is to ordinary souls dull, common, familiar, but to them was ever new, ever mysterious, ever delightful and instructive.

Few know how small a part intercourse with nature for itself alone—not for what it teaches, but for what it is, a revelation of Divine beauty and wisdom and goodness—had even a half century ago for the common mind. Wordsworth in England, Bryant in America, awoke this sleeping capacity, and by their tender and awed sense of the spiritual meaning conveyed in nature's consummate beauties and harmonies, gave almost a new sense to our generation. Before their day, we had praises of the seasons and passages of poetry in which cataracts, sunsets, rainbows and garden flowers were faithfully described; but nature as a whole—as a presence, the very garment of God—was almost unheeded and unknown. When we consider what Bryant's poems—read in the public schools in happy selection—have done to form the taste and feed the sentiment of two generations, we shall begin to estimate the value of his influence. And when we recall in all his writings not a thought or feeling that is not pure, uplifting and reverent, we can partly measure the gratitude we owe to a benefactor whose genius has consecrated the woods and fields and brooks and wayside flowers, in a way intelligible to plainer minds, and yet above the criticism of the most fastidious and cultivated.

But if fortunate in passing his early life in the country, and forming his taste and his style in communion with nature, a few good books and a few earnest and sincere people, he was equally fortunate in being driven by a love of independence into the study of the law and a ten years' practice in a considerable town in Western Massachusetts, and then drawn to this city, where he drifted into the only form of public life wholly suited to his capacities—the editorial profession.

It was no accident that made Bryant a poli-

tician and an editor. Sympathy with individual men and women was not his strong point—but sympathy with our common humanity was in him a religious passion. He had a constitutional love of freedom, and an intense sentiment of justice, and they constituted together his political creed and policy. He believed in freedom, and this made him a friend of the oppressed, an enemy of slavery, a foe to special and class legislation, an advocate of free trade—a natural democrat, though born and reared in a federal community that looked with suspicion upon extensions of the suffrage and upon the growth of local and State rights. But his love of freedom was too genuine to allow him to condone the faults even of his own party, when freedom's friends were found on the other side. He could bear, he *did* bear the odium of his unpopular conviction, when what was called the best society in New York was of another opinion and belonged to another party; and he could bear with equal fortitude the ignominy of lacking party fidelity, when his patriotic spirit felt that his old political friends were less faithful than they should be to freedom and union. The editorial profession enabled his shy and somewhat unsocial nature to work at arm's length for the good of humanity and the country; and I can conceive of no other calling in life that would have economized his temperament and faculties so fully in the public service. His literary skill, his industry, his humane philosophy, his sentiments of justice, his patriotism, his love of freedom here found full scope without straining and tasking his personal sympathies, which lacked the readiness, the tact and the geniality that in some men make direct contact with their fellow creatures an increase of power and of influence. What an editor he made, you all know. None could long doubt the honesty, the conscientiousness, the elevation and purity of his convictions or his utterances. Who believes he ever swerved a line, for the sake of popularity or pelf, from what he felt to be right and true? That he escaped all prostitution of his pen or his conscience, in his exposed and tempted calling, we all admirably confess. And what moderation, candor and courage he carried into his editorial work. Purity of thought, elegance and sim-

plcity of style, exquisite taste and high morality characterized all he wrote. He rebuked the headlong spirit of party, sensational extravagances of expression, even the use of new-fangled phrases and un-English words. He could see and acknowledge the merits of those from whom he widely differed, while unbecoming personalities found no harbor in his columns. Young men and women never found anything to corrupt their taste or their morals in his paper, and families could safely lay the *EVENING POST* upon the table where their children and their guests might take it up. Uncompromising in what his convictions commanded, and never evading the frankest expression of his real opinion, however unpopular, he was felt to be above mere partisanship, and so had a decided influence with men of all political preferences. His prose was in its way as good as his poetry, and has aided greatly to correct the taste for swollen, gaudy and pretentious writing in the public press. He was not alone in this respect, for none can fail to recall the services in this direction of Charles King and Horace Greeley, not to name less conspicuous instances. But Bryant's poetic fame gave peculiar authority to his editorial example, and made his style specially helpful and instructive. That he should have succeeded in keeping the poetic temperament and the tastes and pursuits of a poet fully alive under the active and incessant pressure of his journalistic labors—making his bread and his immediate influence as a citizen and a leader of public sentiment by editorial work, while he “built the lofty rhyme” for the gratification of his genius and for the sake of beauty and art, without one glance at immediate suffrages or rewards—if not a solitary, is at least a perfect, example of the union in one man of the power to work with nearly equal success in two planes, where what he did in one did not contradict or conflict with what he did in the other, while they were not mingled or confounded. Nobody detects the editor, the politician, the man of business, in Bryant's poetry, and few feel the poet in his editorial writings; but the man of conscience, of humanity, of justice and truth, of purity and honor, appears equally in both. This is somewhat the more remarkable, because affluence, versatil-

ity and humor are not characteristic of his genius. It is staid, earnest, profoundly truthful and pure, lofty and perfectly genuine—but not mercurial, vivacious, protean and brilliant. Like the Jordan that leaps into being full, strong, crystal-pure, but swells little in its deep bed, all its course to the sea—admitting few tributaries and putting out no branches, Bryant's genius sprang complete into public notice when he was still in his teens; it retained its character for sixty years almost unchanged, and its latest products are marked with the essential qualities that gave him his first success. Never, perhaps, was there an instance of such precocity in point of wisdom and maturity as that which marked “*Thanatopsis*,” written at eighteen, or of such persistency in judgment, force and melody as that exhibited in his last public ode, written at 83, on occasion of Washington's last birth-day. Between these two bounds lies one even path, high, finished, faultless, in which comes a succession of poems, always meditative, always steeped in the love and knowledge of nature, always pure and melodious, always stamped with his sign-manual of flawless taste and gem-like purity—but never much aside from the line and direction that marked the first outburst and the last flow of his genius.

Happy the man that knows his own powers—their limits, and their aptitudes—and who confines himself rigidly within the banks of his own peculiar inspiration. Bryant was too genuine, too real a lover of nature, too legitimate a child of the muse, ever to strain his own gift. He never *made* verse, but allowed his verse to flow, inspired by keen observation and hearty enjoyment of nature, watching only that it flowed smoothly and without turbulence or turbidness, which his consummate art enabled him perfectly to accomplish. Never, perhaps, was a natural gift more successfully trained and cultured, without losing its original raciness and simplicity. Nothing less than the widest and deepest study of poetry, in all literatures young and old, in all languages and schools, could have enabled him to keep his verse in such perfect finish for sixty successive years. He knew all the wiles of the poet, some of which he disdained to practise—but of no man in his time was it less safe to assume ignorance or neglect of anything that

belonged to the poet's art. His knowledge of poetry was prodigious, his memory of it precise and inexhaustible. He had considered all the masters, and knew their quality and characteristics. But marked as his own style is, it is marked only with its native hues. There is no trick in his adroitness—no artifice in his art; nothing that tires, except it be the uniformity of its excellence. Considering how long his genius has been known and acknowledged, and how thoroughly he represents the old school of Dryden in his purity and fastidiousness of language, it is, perhaps, not to be wondered at that his popularity as a citizen and a man has even somewhat eclipsed his immediate popularity as a poet. I think him fortunate in not having the popularity of novelty, of fashion, of sing-song verse, of morbid sentiment, of mere ingenious thinking, or some temporary adaptation to passing moods of popular feeling, whether in universities or in social circles. He curiously escaped, if indeed his truthful genuineness of nature did not give him an original defence against it, from the introversive, self-considering, and individualistic temper which has characterized much of the poetry, of the highest academic culture, in our time. Either he was born too early, or he emigrated from New England too early, to fall under the influence of this morbid subjectiveness; or his active and practical pursuits kept him in the current of real life, and near to the universal feeling of men. At any rate—free, rational, as his genius ever was—there is not a suspicion of the sceptical or denying element in his works. He is not sick nor morbid, nor melancholy, nor discouraged.

Sentiment enough he has, but no sentimentality; awe of the Infinite, but no agnosticism; a recognition of all human sorrows and sins, but no querulousness, much less any despair. He loved and honored human nature; he feared and revered his Maker; he accepted Christianity in its historic character; he believed in American institutions; he believed in the church and its permanency, in its ordinances and its ministry; and he was no backward-looking praiser of the times that had been, and a mere accuser and defamer of the times that are. This made his poetry, as it made his prose and his whole in-

fluence, wholesome, hopeful, nutritious; young, without being inexperienced, ripe, without tending to decay. The very absence of those false colors which give immediate attractiveness to the clothing of some contemporary poetry, gives his undyed and natural robes a fadeless charm, which future generations will not forget to honor. Every one must notice that great immediate popularity is not a good augury for enduring fame; and further, that poetry, like all the products of the fine arts, must have not only positive quality, power and harmony, but must add to these freedom from defects. It is strange what an embalming power lies in purity of style, to preserve thoughts that would perish, even though greater and more original, if wrapped in a less perfect vesture. What element of decay is there in Bryant's verse? How universal his themes; how intelligible and level to the common heart; how little ingenious, vague or technical; how free from what is provincial, temporary, capricious; how unflawed with doubtful figures or strained comparisons or new and strange words; how unmarred by a forced order or weary mannerisms! He is a rigid Puritan, alike in his morals and his vocabulary; there is scarcely a false foot, a doubtful rhyme, a luckless epithet, a dubious sentiment anywhere to be found in his works. And perhaps nature withheld from him what is called an ear for music only to emphasize his ear for rhythm, and save him from the danger of a clogging sweetness and a fatiguing sing-song.

It is the glory of this man that his character outshone even his great talent and his large fame. Distinguished equally for his native gifts and his consummate culture, his poetic inspiration and his exquisite art, he is honored and loved to-day even more for his stainless purity of life, his unswerving rectitude of will, his devotion to the higher interests of his race, his unfeigned patriotism, and his broad humanity. It is remarkable that with none of the arts of popularity a man so little dependent on others' appreciation, so self-subsistent and so retiring, who never sought or accepted office, who had little taste for co-operation, and no bustling zeal in ordinary philanthropy, should have drawn to himself the confidence, the honor and reverence of a great

metropolis, and become, perhaps it is not too much to say, our first citizen. It was in spite of a constitutional reserve, a natural distaste for crowds and public occasions, and a somewhat chilled bearing towards his kind, that he achieved by the force of his great merit and solid worth this triumph over the heart of his generation. The *purity* of the snow that enveloped him was more observed than its *coldness*, and his fellow-citizens believed that a fire of zeal for truth, justice and human rights burned steadily at the heart of this lofty personality, though it never flamed or smoked. And they were right! Beyond all thirst for fame or poetic honor, lay in Bryant the ambition of virtue. Reputation he did not despise, but virtue he revered and sought with all his heart. He had an intense self-reverence, that made his own good opinion of his own motives and actions absolutely essential. And though little tempted by covetousness, envy, worldliness, or love of power, he had his own conscious difficulties to contend with, a temper not without turbulence, a susceptibility to injuries, a contempt for the moral weaknesses of others. But he labored incessantly at self-knowledge and self-control, and attained equanimity and gentleness to a marked degree. Let none suppose that the persistent force of his will, his incessant industry, his perfect consistency and coherency of life and character, were not backed by strong passions. With a less consecrated purpose, a less reverent love of truth and goodness, he might easily have become acrid, vindictive or selfishly ambitious. But he kept his body under, and, a far more difficult task for him, his spirit in subjection. God had given him a wonderful balance of faculties in a marvellously harmonious frame. His spirit wore a light and lithe vesture of clay, that never burdened him. His senses were perfect at fourscore. His eyes needed no glasses; his hearing was exquisitely fine. His alertness was the wonder of his contemporaries. He outwalked men of middle age. His tastes were so simple as to be almost ascetic. Milk and cereals and fruits were his chosen diet. He had no vices, and no approach to them, and he avoided any and every thing that could ever threaten him with the tyranny of the senses or of habit.

Regular in all his habits, he retained his youth almost to the last. His power of work never abated, and the herculean translation of Homer which was the amusement of the last lustre of his long and busy life showed not only no senility or decline in artistic skill, but no decrease of intellectual or physical endurance.

Perhaps the last ten years of his life have made him nearer and dearer to his fellow-citizens than any previous decade; for he had become at last not only resigned to public honors, but had even acquired a late and tardy taste for social and public gatherings. Who so often called to preside in your public meetings or to speak at your literary or social festivals? who has pronounced as many hearty welcomes to honored strangers, unveiled as many statues, graced as many occasions of public sympathy; who so ready to appear at the call of your public charities, or more affectionately welcomed and honored on your platforms? All this, coming late in life, was a grateful, I might almost say a fond surprise. He had wrapped himself in his cloak to contend with the winter wind of his earlier fortunes, and the harder it blew (and it was very rough in his middle life) the closer he drew it about him. But the sun of prosperity and honor and confidence that warmed and brightened the two closing decades of his life, fairly melted away his proud reserve toward the public, and he laid himself open to the warm and fragrant breeze of universal favor. He was careful, however, to say that he did not hold himself at the public's high estimate. In a long conversation I had with him at Roslyn, two years ago, he showed such a surprising self-knowledge and such a just appreciation of popular suffrages, that it was impossible to doubt his genuine humility, or jealous determination not to be deceived by any contagious sentiment of personal reverence or honor springing up in a generation that was largely ignorant of his writings. Yet he fully and greatly enjoyed these tributes—and more and more, the longer he lived.

Of Mr. Bryant's life-long interest in the Fine Arts; his large acquaintance with our older artists and close friendship with some of them; of his place in the Century Club, of which he was perhaps the chief founder, and of which he died

the honored President, I could speak with full knowledge; but artists and centurions both are sure to speak better for themselves, in due time, as the city and the nation surely will.

I must reserve the few moments still left me to bear the testimony which no one has a better right to offer, to Mr. Bryant's strictly religious character. A devoted lover of religious liberty, he was an equal lover of religion itself—not in any precise dogmatic form, but in its righteousness, reverence and charity. What his theology was, you may safely infer from his regular and long attendance in this place of Christian worship. Still, he was not a dogmatist, but preferred practical piety and working virtue to all modes of faith. What was obvious in him for twenty years past was an increasing respect and devotion to religious institutions, and a more decided Christian quality in his faith. I think he had never been a communicant in any church until he joined ours, fifteen years ago. From that time, nobody so regular in his attendance on public worship, in wet and dry, cold and heat, morning and evening, until the very last month of his life. The increasing sweetness and beneficence of his character, meanwhile, must have struck his familiar friends. His last years were his devoutest and most humane years. He became beneficent, as he grew able to be so, and his hand was open to all just need, and to many unreasonable claimants.

The first half or even two-thirds of his life had been a hard struggle with fortune. And he had acquired saving habits, thanks chiefly to the prudence of his honored and ever lamented wife. But the moment he became successful and acquired the means of beneficence, he practised it bountifully, indeed, perhaps often credulously. For he was simple-hearted and unsuspecting, easily misled by women's tears and entreaties, and not always with the fortitude to say No—when only his own money was at stake. Indeed he had few defensive weapons either against intrusion or supplication, and could with difficulty withstand the approaches of those that fawned upon him, or those that asked his countenance for selfish purposes. Perhaps he understood their weaknesses, but he had not the heart to medicine them with brave refusal.

He endowed a public library in Cummington, his birth-place, at a cost of many thousands. He built and gave a public hall to the village of Roslyn, L. I., the chosen and beloved summer home of his declining years. When, at his request, I went to dedicate it to public use, and at a proper moment asked "What shall we call this building?" the audience shouted "Bryant Hall!" No, said the modest benefactor, let it be known and called simply "The Hall," and The Hall it was baptized.

I shall have spoken in vain, if I have not left upon your hearts the image of an upright, sincere, humane and simple yet venerable manhood—a life full of outward honors and inward worth. When I consider that I have been speaking of one whose fame fills the world, I feel how vain is public report compared with the honor of God and the gratitude and love of humanity! It is the private character of this unaffected, Christian man that it most concerns us to consider and to imitate. He was great as the world counts greatness—he was greater as God counts it.

He is gone! and the city and the country is immeasurably poorer, that his venerable and exalted presence no more adorns and crowns our assemblies. But Heaven is richer! The Church of Christ adds one unaffected, unsanctimonious saint to its calendar. The patriarch of American literature is dead. The faithful Christian lives ever more :—

"Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven

Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my very heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given
And shall not soon depart."

—Bryant's lines "To a Waterfowl."

We are about to bear his remains to their quiet and green resting-place, by the side of his beloved wife—the good angel of his life—in Roslyn, L. I. Let me read in conclusion the warrant for this step in his own poem called "June," which I am persuaded you will feel to be the only fit conclusion of these memorial words :—

I gazed upon the glorious sky,
And the green mountains round,
And thought that when I came to lie
At rest within the ground,

'Twere pleasant that in flowery June,
 When brooks send up a cheerful tune,
 And groves a cheerful sound,
 The sexton's hand, my grave to make,
 The rich, green mountain-turf should break.

A cell within the frozen mould,
 A coffin borne through sleet,
 And icy clods above it rolled,
 While fierce the tempests beat—
 Away!—I will not think of these;
 Blue be the sky and soft the breeze,
 Earth green beneath the feet,
 And be the damp mould gently pressed
 Into my narrow place of rest.

There, through the long, long summer hours,
 The golden light should lie,
 And thick young herbs and groups of flowers
 Stand in their beauty by.
 The oriole should build and tell
 His love-tale close beside my cell;
 The idle butterfly
 Should rest him there, and there be heard
 The housewife bee and humming bird.

And what if cheerful shouts at noon
 Come from the village sent,

Or song of maids beneath the moon
 With fairy laughter blent?
 And what if, in the evening light,
 Bethrothed lovers walk in sight
 Of my low monument?
 I would the lovely scene around
 Might know no sadder sight nor sound.

I know that I no more should see
 The season's glorious show,
 Nor would its brightness shine for me,
 Nor its wild music flow;
 But if, around my place of sleep,
 The friends I love should come to weep,
 They might not haste to go.
 Soft airs, and song, and light and bloom
 Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

These to their softened hearts should bear
 The thought of what has been,
 And speak of one who cannot share
 The gladness of the scene;
 Whose part, in all the pomp that fills
 The circuit of the summer hills,
 Is that his grave is green;
 And deeply would their hearts rejoice
 To hear again his living voice.

REMINISCENCES.

BY AN EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE.

I suppose that none of us who have had the privilege of being Mr. Bryant's associates and helpers in his daily work, especially during these placid last years of his life, will ever be able to think of him at all without thinking of his goings and comings among us, of the kindly words and pleasant ways with which he lightened our labors, the uniform equability of temper with which he conducted business, the philosophical calm with which he contemplated affairs of a disturbing nature, and the modest simplicity of bearing with which he prevented the reverence that all of us felt for him from finding expression in our treatment of him.

I suppose that he must have known how profoundly we respected and honored him, not as the most gifted poet of our country only, or even chiefly, but still more as a man of ideal character worthy of a reverence which no other man could have won from us. I say I suppose he must have known that we honored him thus, but there was never a sign of such consciousness in his bearing. He was reserved always by nature, but his reserve was rather that of shy modesty than that of conscious worth, and in his intercourse with his associates in the office of the *EVENING POST* he was always singularly frank and easy. He even avoided that appearance of superior authority which is almost inseparable from the exercise of control over the working of a newspaper staff. His few and infrequent commands were requests always, and not only so, they were requests framed in the language and uttered in the tone of one who asks a favor, not of one who merely wishes to disguise a command.

Notwithstanding his age and his chiefship in the office, he never, to my knowledge, sent for any member of his staff to come to him; if he had aught to say he went to the person to whom he wished to say it. He would pass through the editorial rooms with a cheery "good morning;" he would sit down by one's desk and talk if there was aught to talk about; or, if asked a question while passing, would stand while answering it, and frequently would relate some anecdote suggested by the question or offer some apt quotation to illustrate the subject under discussion.

When Tupper wrote his play, "Washington," and all the newspaper wits were pricking the author of "Proverbial Philosophy" with sharp pens, an article was written in the office in which it was urged that Tupper, having done no harm in the world, having written what a large class of readers wanted to read, and having sought to the best of his ability to pay a tribute to Washington and to America, was entitled to mercy at the hands of all Americans. There was a frank declaration in the article of its writer's conviction that Tupper's works were as worthless as they were harmless, and the plea for him was generally a plea for innocent feebleness. As it was known that Mr. Bryant had met Tupper in England, the managing editor thought it best to submit the article in proof to Mr. Bryant before using it as an editorial utterance. Mr. Bryant read it, and came in laughing over some of its playful points.

"I wish," he said, "that you had used this without showing it to me; then I could have

said truly that it was printed without my knowledge. It ought to be printed; but, now that I know of it, I scarcely see how it can be, for Tupper is coming to New York next year, and I shall have to entertain him at my house."

"But that is a year hence," replied the managing editor, "and Mr. Tupper will not know that such an article appeared."

"Oh, yes he will," said Mr. Bryant, "you remember the line about 'some damned good-natured friend,' who is sure to direct his attention to it."

His quotations in conversation were from a great variety of sources, but the most extensive one I ever heard him make was from Cowley, of whose poetry Mr. Bryant made a special study during the latter part of his life. I do not remember now what the occasion was or from what poem he quoted, but I shall never forget the effect it produced. He was standing by a form around which the printers were gathered, hastily getting it ready for the press. Some casual word was spoken which suggested the lines, and Mr. Bryant, locking his hands before him, repeated the verses with wonderful force and tenderness, causing the printers, hurried as they were, to pause and listen. As he finished he turned to the woodwork around the elevator, and, tapping it, said, "There is very little wood there to make trouble in case of fire." There was a look of almost boyish abashment in his face as he recovered from the fine enthusiasm.

Mr. Bryant's tenderness of the feelings of other persons, and his earnest desire always to avoid the giving of unnecessary pain, were very marked. Soon after I began to do the duties of literary editor, Mr. Bryant who was reading a review of a little book of wretchedly halting verse, said to me:

"I wish you would deal very gently with poets, especially with the weaker ones."

Later I had a very bad case of poetic idiocy to deal with, and as Mr. Bryant happened to come into my room while I was debating the matter in my mind, I said to him that I was embarrassed by his injunction to deal gently with poets, and pointed out to him the utter impossibility of finding anything to praise or even lightly to condemn in the book before me. After

I had read some of its stanzas to him he answered: "No, you can't praise it, of course; it won't do to lie about it, but"—turning the volume over in his hand and inspecting it—"you might say that the binding is securely put on, and that—well, the binder has planed the edges pretty smooth."

There is a large class of hopeless versifiers who have been in the habit of sending their poetic wares to Mr. Bryant and asking his judgment upon them, and, between his tender conscience, which would not permit him to trifle with the truth, and his keen reluctance to give pain, he was sometimes sorely perplexed. These things imposed upon him, too, an amount of labor for others which was an unfair burden, and on one occasion he came into my room with a parcel of letters and papers in his hand and in a tone of dejection asked me: "Do people send you their manuscripts to read in this way?" I replied that a good many of them did, and showed him the manuscript of a novel or an epic poem which a Pennsylvanian youth had modestly requested me to revise for the press.

"What do you write to them?" he asked. Then he sat down and told me how sorely he suffered from the perplexity already mentioned, and I ventured to suggest that a letter of even seeming commendation from him to an ambitious incapable might spoil a good blacksmith and make a ridiculously poor poet; that perhaps a good many of his correspondents sought his approval in this way as a bolster to their vanity; and that the greatest kindness, in very many cases, that he could do to his correspondents would be frankly to tell them that they could not write poetry. He admitted the correctness of this view, with something like a shudder, and the matter ended by his acceptance of my suggestion that he should refer the letters and poems of his unknown correspondents to the staff for examination, and that we should report directly to the writers.

They continued to task him in this way, however, to the end. On the morning of that sad day on which he met with his mishap he came into my room with a pair of poems sent to him by a person whom he knew and asked me to read

them. I did so and found them to be extremely poor stuff.

"I supposed so," he said; "and now I suppose I shall have to write to her on the subject. People expect too much of me—altogether too much."

It was like a wail, and when the news of his fall and of his illness came the words rang in my ears with a terrible sadness.

The conversation that morning was the longest I ever had with him, and it was one which would have no little value to the public if I might here report it in full. I had always taken pains to profit by his casual comments upon literature and literary subjects, for although his tenderness always restrained him from writing criticisms, our literature has had no sounder, no more acute, no more wisely appreciative critic than he. On that fatal morning something in our conversation brought up the subjects of American literature and American criticism, and he talked for nearly an hour in review of the whole field, classifying and arranging the different branches of the subject as skilfully as he would have done it in an essay, and expressing some unconventional opinions which startled me by their vigorous originality, and by the apparent care with which they had been wrought out in his mind. His conversation was a critical history of American literature in miniature, and some of the opinions expressed would shock that class of critics whose admiration of anything American is tempered by a truly Nazarene conviction of the unworthiness of Nazareth.

It is a curious fact that in recalling these conversations, guided as they always were by the circumstances of the moment, and spontaneous as his utterances were, I cannot recall a single instance in which Mr. Bryant said a harsh or even a mildly condemnatory thing of any human being. He was vigorous in his condemnation of unworthy things, unworthy acts and unworthy principles of action; but nothing that he ever said in my presence indicated his dislike for any man, although I have heard him talk of men whom he must have detested, unless he was free from the otherwise universal human tendency to detest the man who does detestable acts.

No man probably ever contemplated death with more philosophical placidity than Mr. Bryant did. Having sung death's praises in his "Hymn to Death," he proved the sincerity of his verse in his life. His calmness, however, was not the morbid calmness of one who has worn out his love of life and his fear of death in contemplating its coming. His interest in life and the affairs of life was keen to the last; he never talked of death except when the subject naturally arose, and then his words were always those of unfaltering trust, always those of a healthful nature to which life and death are alike—not indifferent, but right. The only direct reference he ever made to his own end within my knowledge was on the day when the news came of the late Pope's death. Mr. Bryant happened to be in the office on that day, and the managing editor of the *EVENING POST* carried the news to him.

"I am glad he is dead," said Mr. Bryant; and then he added, by way of explanation, "I wanted to see what they would do over there before making my own bow." It was said in the cheeriest way possible, and the reference to the approach of his own end was made precisely as might have been a reference to an approaching change from his city house to his Roslyn home. I think, indeed, that he contemplated death very much in that way. He told me, when Canon Farrar's "Eternal Hope" was published, that he had fully satisfied himself years ago on the subject of a future life; that he had gone carefully over the whole ground, and, he added, "I have a confidence that is not to be shaken, that if consciousness exists at all beyond the tomb, it is the consciousness of life, not of death. If we are awakened after that sleep, I cannot doubt that the awakening will be for our good." Then he laughingly referred to the care with which the *EVENING POST* had avoided the expression of an opinion on the theological question in reviewing the book, and related the anecdote of a woman who, after hearing her somewhat heterodox pastor preach a sermon setting forth a doctrine of limited future punishment, went to him and thanked him, saying, "That is so much better than no hell at all."

THE FLOOD OF YEARS.

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

A MIGHTY HAND, from an exhaustless urn,
Pours forth the never-ending Flood of Years
Among the nations. How the rushing waves
Bear all before them! On their foremost edge,
And there alone, is Life; the Present there
Tosses and foams and fills the air with roar
Of mingled noises. There are they who toil,
And they who strive, and they who feast, and they
Who hurry to and fro. The sturdy hind—
Woodman and delver with the spade—are there,
And busy artisan beside his bench,
And pallid student with his written roll.
A moment on the mounting billow seen—
The flood sweeps over them and they are gone.
There groups of revelers, whose brows are twined
With roses, ride the topmost swell awhile,
And as they raise their flowing cups to touch
The clinking brim to brim, are whirled beneath
The waves and disappear. I hear the jar
Of beaten drums, and thunders that break forth
From cannon, where the advancing billow sends
Up to the sight long files of armed men,
That hurry to the charge through flame and smoke.
The torrent bears them under, whelmed and hid,
Slayer and slain, in heaps of bloody foam.
Down go the steed and rider; the plumed chief
Sinks with his followers; the head that wears
The imperial diadem goes down beside
The felon's with cropped ear and branded cheek.
A funeral train—the torrent sweeps away
Bearers and bier and mourners. By the bed
Of one who dies men gather sorrowing,
And women weep aloud; the flood rolls on;
The wail is stifled, and the sobbing group
Borne under. Hark to that shrill sudden shout—
The cry of an applauding multitude
Swayed by some loud-tongued orator who wields
The living mass, as if he were its soul.
The waters choke the shout and all is still.
Lo, next, a kneeling crowd and one who spreads
The hands in prayer; the engulfing wave o'ertakes

And swallows them and him. A sculptor wields
The chisel, and the stricken marble grows
To beauty; at his easel, eager-eyed,
A painter stands, and sunshine, at his touch
Gathers upon the canvas, and life glows;
A poet, as he paces to and fro,
Murmurs his sounding line. Awhile they ride
The advancing billow, till its tossing crest
Strikes them and flings them under while their tasks
Are yet unfinished. See a mother smile
On her young babe that smiles to her again—
The torrent wrests it from her arms; she shrieks,
And weeps, and midst her tears is carried down.
A beam like that of moonlight turns the spray
To glistening pearls; two lovers, hand in hand,
Rise on the billowy swell and fondly look
Into each other's eyes. The rushing flood
Flings them apart; the youth goes down; the maid,
With hands out-stretched in vain and streaming eyes,
Waits for the next high wave to follow him.
An aged man succeeds; his bending form
Sinks slowly; mingling with the sullen stream
Gleam the white locks and then are seen no more.

Lo, wider grows the stream; a sea-like flood
Saps earth's walled cities; massive palaces
Crumble before it; fortresses and towers
Dissolve in the swift waters; populous realms
Swept by the torrent, see their ancient tribes
Engulfed and lost, their very languages
Stifled and never to be uttered more.

I pause and turn my eyes and, looking back,
Where that tumultuous flood has passed, I see
The silent Ocean of the Past, a waste
Of waters weltering over graves, its shores
Strewn with the wreck of fleets, where mast and hull
Drop away piecemeal; battlemented walls
Frown idly, green with moss, and temples stand
Unroofed, forsaken by the worshippers.
There lie memorial stones, whence time has gnawed
The graven legends, thrones of kings o'erturned,
The broken altars of forgotten gods,

Foundations of old cities and long streets
 Where never fall of human foot is heard
 Upon the desolate pavement. I behold
 Dim glimmerings of lost jewels far within
 The sleeping waters, diamond, sardonyx,
 Ruby and topaz, pearl and chrysolite,
 Once glittering at the banquet on fair brows
 That long ago were dust; and all around,
 Strewn on the waters of that silent sea,
 Are withering bridal wreaths, and glossy locks
 Shorn from fair brows by loving hands, and scrolls
 O'erwritten,—haply with fond words of love
 And vows of friendship—and fair pages flung
 Fresh from the printer's engine. There they lie
 A moment and then sink away from sight.

I look, and the quick tears are in my eyes,
 For I behold, in every one of these,
 A blighted hope, a separate history
 Of human sorrow, telling of dear ties
 Suddenly broken, dreams of happiness
 Dissolved in air, and happy days, too brief,
 That sorrowfully ended, and I think
 How painfully must the poor heart have beat
 In bosoms without number, as the blow
 Was struck that slew their hope or broke their peace.

Sadly I turn, and look before, where yet
 The Flood must pass, and I behold a mist
 Where swarm dissolving forms, the brood of Hope,
 Divinely fair, that rest on banks of flowers
 Or wander among rainbows, fading soon
 And reappearing, haply giving place
 To shapes of grisly aspect, such as Fear
 Molds from the idle air; where serpents lift
 The head to strike, and skeletons stretch forth
 The bony arm in menace. Further on

A belt of darkness seems to bar the way,
 Long, low and distant, where the Life that Is
 Touches the Life to come. The Flood of Years
 Rolls toward it, nearer and nearer. It must pass
 That dismal barrier. What is there beyond?
 Hear what the wise and good have said. Beyond
 That belt of darkness still the years roll on
 More gently, but with not less mighty sweep.
 They gather up again and softly bear
 All the sweet lives that late were overwhelmed
 And lost to sight—all that in them was good,
 Noble, and truly great and worthy of love—
 The lives of infants and ingenuous youths,
 Sages and saintly women who have made
 Their households happy—all are raised and borne
 By that great current on its onward sweep,
 Wandering and rippling with caressing waves
 Around green islands, fragrant with the breath
 Of flowers that never wither. So they pass,
 From stage to stage, along the shining course
 Of that fair river broadening like a sea.
 As its smooth eddies curl along their way,
 They bring old friends together; hands are clasped
 In joy unspeakable; the mother's arms
 Again are folded round the child she loved
 And lost. Old sorrows are forgotten now,
 Or but remembered to make sweet the hour
 That overpays them; wounded hearts that bled
 Or broke are healed forever. In the room
 Of this grief-shadowed Present there shall be
 A Present in whose reign no grief shall gnaw
 The heart, and never shall a tender tie
 Be broken—in whose reign the eternal Change
 That waits on growth and action shall proceed
 With everlasting Concord hand in hand.

